The Picaroons

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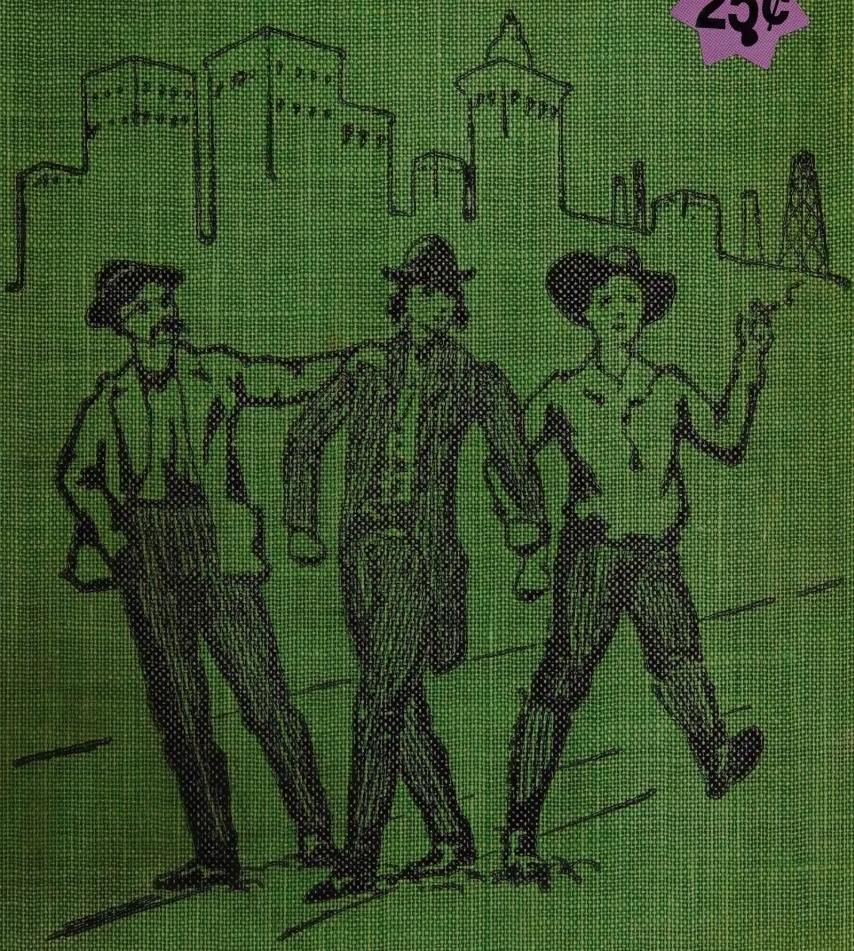

Gelett Burgess & Will Irwin

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THE PICAROONS

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A SAN FRANCISCO NIGHT'S ENTERTAINMENT

BY

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NOTE.—*Picaroon = a petty rascal, one who lives by his wits, an adventurer. The Picaresque Tales, in Spanish literature of the beginning of the seventeenth century, dealt with the fortunes of beggars, impostors, thieves, etc., and chronicled the Romance of Roguery. Such stories were the precursors of the modern novel. The* SAN FRANCISCO NIGHT'S ENTERTAINMENT *is an attempt to render similar subjects with an essentially modern setting.*

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THE PICAROONS

CHAPTER I

A MIRACLE AT COFFEE JOHN'S

THE lad in the sweater yawned with abandon, and glanced up at the clock which hung on the white-washed wall between a lithograph of Admiral Dewey and a sign bearing the legend 'Doughnuts and Coffee, 5 cents.'

'I move we proceed,' he said impatiently. 'There'll be nobody else here to-night; all the stewbums have lined up at the bakeries for free bread. I say, old man, you pull the trigger, and we're off! I've got a two days' handicap on my appetite, and I won't do a thing but make an Asiatic ostrich of myself!'

'I'll back my stomach against yours,' said the man with spectacles who sat opposite him. 'I'll bet I could eat a ton of sinkers and a barrel of this brown paint. I'm for rounding up the grub myself. I'll be eating the oilcloth off this table pretty soon!'

The proprietor of the dingy little restaurant turned to them from the counter in front, where he had been arranging a pile of wet plates and an exhibit of pastry in preparation for the next morning's breakfasts. Wiping his hands on his apron, he said, with a Cockney accent which proclaimed his birth, hinted at by his florid countenance and mutton-chop whiskers :

' I sye, gents, if yer don't want to wyte, yer know bloomin' well wot yer *kin* do, an' that's get art ! Strike me pink if yer ain't gort a gall ! Yer a bit comin' on, gents, if yer don't mind me syin' it. I told yer I'd give yer an A 1 feed if yer'd on'y wyte for another bloke to show up, an' he ain't 'ere yet, is 'e ? Leastwise, I don't see 'im.'

He took off his apron, nevertheless, as if he too were anxiously expectant, and he cast repeated glances at the door, where, painted on the window in white letters, were the words, ' Coffee John's.' Then he left the range behind the counter, and came across the sanded floor to the single oil lamp that lighted the two men who were his last patrons for the day. The younger, he with the red sweater, had a round jocund face and a merry rolling eye that misfortune was powerless to tame, though the lad had evidently discovered Vagabondia.

'Who's your interesting but mysterious friend?' he asked. 'You're not expecting a lady, I hope!' and he glanced at his coat, which, though it had the cut of a fashionable tailor, was an atrocious harlequin of spots and holes.

'I don't know who's a-comin' no more'n you do,' Coffee John replied; 'but see 'ere'—and he pointed with a blunt red finger at an insurance calendar upon the wall. 'D'you cop thet there numero? It's the thirteenth of October to-dye, an' there'll be comp'ny all right. They allus is!'

'Well, you rope him, and we'll brand him,' remarked the other at the table, a man of some twenty-two years, with a typically Western cast of countenance, high cheek-bones, and an aquiline nose. His eyes were gray blue behind rusty steel spectacles. 'I hope that stranger will come pretty durn pronto,' he added.

'There'll be somethink a-doin' before nine, I give yer *my* word. I'll eat this 'ere bloomin' pile o' plytes if they ain't!' Coffee John asserted.

Scarcely had he made the remark when the clock rang out, ending his sentence like a string of exclamation points, and immediately the door burst open, and a man sprang into the room like a runaway from hell. In his long, thin white face two black eyes, set near together, burned with terror. His mouth

was open and quivering, his hands were fiercely clenched. Under a battered Derby hat his stringy black hair and ragged beard played over his paper collar in a fringe. He wore a cutaway suit, green and shiny with age, which, divorced at the waist, showed a ring of red flannel undershirt. He crept up to the counter like a kicked spaniel.

'For God's sake gimme a drink o' coffee, will you ?' he whined.

'Wot's bitin' yer ?' Coffee John inquired without sentiment. 'Don't arsk me to chynge a 'undred-dollar bill, fur I can't do it !'

'I lost my nerves, that's all,' he said, looking over his shoulder apprehensively. Then, turning to the two at the table, he gazed at them over the top of a thick mug of coffee. 'Lord ! that's good ! I'm better now,' he went on, and wiped his moustache with a curling tongue, finishing with his sleeve. 'If I should narrate to you the experience which has just transpired, gents, you wouldn't believe it. You'd regard myself as a imposition. But facts is authentic, nevertheless, and cannot be dissented from, however sceptical !'

'See here,' cried the lad in the sweater, not too unkindly, 'suppose you tell us about it some other time ! We've been waiting for you many madsome moons, and the time is ripe for the harvest. If you

are as hungry as we are, and want to be among those present at this function, sit down, and you'll get whatever is coming to you. You can ascend the rostrum afterwards. We were just looking for one more, and you're it.'

The vagabond looked inquiringly at Coffee John, who in response pointed to a chair.

'Why cert'nly,' the newcomer said, removing his hat; 'I must confess I ain't yet engaged in dinner this evening, and if you gents are so obliged as to——'

'Rope it!' roared the man in spectacles, out of all patience.

The voluble stranger seated himself hurriedly.

Coffee John now drew two tables together. 'Jest excuse me for half a mo, gents, w'ile I unfurl this 'ere rag,' he said, spreading the cloth. The three strangers looked on in surprise, for the Cockney's tone had changed. He wore an expectant smile as he seated himself in the fourth place and rapped loudly on the table, distributing as he did so a damask napkin to each of his guests.

'Gloriana Peacock!' cried the man in spectacles, 'I'm sorry I forgot to wear my dress-suit. I had no idea you put on so much dog for coffee and sinkers.'

'Get wise, old chap,' the man in the sweater said

warningly. 'I have a hunch that this is to be no mere charity poke-out. This is the true chloroform. We're up against a genuine square this trip, or I'm a Patagonian. How about that, Coffee John ?'

The host tucked his napkin into his neck, and replied benignly: 'Oh, I dunno; we'll do wot we kin, an' them as ain't satisfied can order their kerridges.'

As he spoke, three Chinamen emerged from the back-room, and filled up the dusky rows of tables, bearing loaded trays. Swiftly and deftly they spread the board with cut glass, china, and silverware, and aligned a delectable array of bottles in front of the proprietor. In a trice the table began to twinkle with the appointments of a veritable banquet, complete even to a huge centre-piece of California violets. In that shabby hole an entertainment began to blossom like a flower blooming in a dunghill, and the spectators were awed and spellbound at the sudden miracle of the transformation. The man in the red sweater loosened his belt three holes under the table, the black-eyed man pulled a pair of frayed cuffs from his sleeves, and the other wiped his glasses and smiled for the first time. When all was ready, Coffee John arose, and, filling the glasses, cried jubilantly:

'Gents, I gives yer the good 'elth of Solomon

Bauer, Esquire, an' the thirteenth of October, an' drink 'earty !'

The toast was drunk with wonder, for the men were visibly impressed ; but at the entry of oysters each began to eat as if he were afraid it were all a dream, and he might awake before it was over. The lad with the merry eye alone showed any restraint ; his manners were those of a gentleman. The one with the spectacles drank like a thirsty horse, and the thin, black-haired individual watched the kitchen door to see what was coming next. Following the oysters came soup, savory with cheese.

'Potage au fromage, *à la* Café Martin, or I've never been in New York !' cried the youngster.

'Correck. I perceive yer by wye of bein' an epicoor,' Coffee John remarked, highly pleased at the appreciation.

'I didn't think they could do it in San Francisco,' the youth went on.

The Cockney turned his pop-eyes at the lad, and, with the bigotry of a proselyte, broached his favourite topic.

'Young man, we kin do anythink they kin in New York, not to speak of a trick or two blokes go to Paris to see done, an' occysionally we kin go 'em one better. You don't know this tarn yet. It's a

bloomin' prize-puzzle, thet's wot it is ; they's a bit of everythink 'ere.'

The fish followed—barracuda as none but Tortoni can broil—then terrapin, teal, venison, and so, with Western prodigality, to the dessert. The guests, having met and subdued the vanguard of hunger, did hilarious battle with the dinner, stabbing and slashing gallantly. No one dared to put his good fortune to the hazard of inquiry, though each was curious, until at last the lad in the sweater could resist wonder no longer. The demands of nature satisfied, his mind sought for diversion. He laid his fork down and pushed back his plate.

'It's too good to be true,' he said. 'I want to know what we're in for, anyway! What's your little game? It may be bad manners to be inquisitive, but I've slept in a waggon, and washed in a horse-trough, and combed my hair with tenpenny nails for so long that I'm not responsible. "'The time has come,' the Walrus said, 'to speak of many things!'" and I balk right here until I know what's up your sleeve. No bum gets a Delmonico dinner at a coffee-joint on the Barbary Coast for nothing, I don't think, and, by John Harvard! I want to be put next to whether this is charity, insanity, a bet, or are you trying to fix us for something shady?'

'What d'you want to stampede the show for?' interrupted the man in spectacles. 'We haven't been asked to pay in advance, have we? We've signed no contract! You were keen to begin as a heifer is for salt, and when we draw a prize you want to look a gift horse in the jaw! Get onto yourself!'

'Gents,' the unctuous voice of the third man broke in, 'they's champagne a-comin'!'

Coffee John had been looking from one to the other in some amusement. 'Easy, gents,' he remarked. 'I ain't offended at this 'ere youngster's expressings, though I don't sye as wot I mightn't be if 'e wan't a gentleman, as I can see by the wye 'e handles 'is knife, an' the suspicious fack of 'is neck bein' clean, if he do wear a jarsey. Nar, all I gort to sye is, that this 'ere feast is on the squyre, an' no questions arsked. As soon as we gits to the corffee, I'll explyne.'

'I accept your apology,' the lad cried gaily, and he rose bubbling with impudence. 'Gentlemen-adventurers, knights of the empty pocket, comrades of the order of the flying brake-beam, and what-not, I drink your very good health. Here's to the jade whose game we played, not once afraid of losing—ah! It is passing many wintry days since I fed on funny water and burned cognac in my *petit noir*,

but there *was* a time—— My name, brothers of the pave, is James Wiswell Coffin, third. Eight Mayflower ancestors, double-barrelled in-and-in stock, Puritans of Plymouth. Wrestling Coffin landed at Salem in the *Blessing of the Bay*, 1630, and——'

'Whoa there!' the man in spectacles cried, 'you ain't so all-fired numerous! I left a happy mountain home myself, but the biographical contest don't come till the show is over in the big tent!'

'Cert'nly not, after you vetoed at my remarks,' said the third. 'Let's testify after the dishes is emptier, and we begin to feel more like a repletion!'

In such wise the guests proceeded with badinage till the fruit appeared. Then, as a plate containing oranges and bananas was placed on the table, the young man of the party suddenly arose with a look of disgust, and turned from the sight.

'See here, Coffee John,' he said pacifically, 'would you mind, as a grand transcontinental favour, removing those bananas? I'm very much afraid I'll have to part with my dinner if you don't.'

'Wot's up?' was the reply.

'Nothing yet,' said the youth. 'But I'll explain later. We'll have to work out all these puzzles and word-squares together.'

The bananas were taken away, while the others

looked on curiously. Then the man with glasses grew serious, and said :

'As long as objections have been raised, and the whole bunch is a bit loco, I don't mind saying I've a request to make myself.'

'Speak up, an' if they's anythin' wrong, I'll try to myke it correck,' said Coffee John. ''Evving knows it ain't 'ardly usual for the likes o' me to tyke orders from the likes o' you, but this dinner is gave to please *if* possible, an' I don't want no complyntes to be neglected. What's the matter nar ?'

'I've been sitting with my back to the wall, as you may have noticed, but there's that over my head that makes me feel pretty sick when I catch myself thinking,' said the objector. 'It's that picture of Dewey. He's all right, and a hero for sure, but if you don't mind would you turn him face to the wall so I can look up ?'

'Don't menshing it,' said Coffee John, rising to gratify this eccentric request. 'Nar wot's *your* private an' partickler farncy ?' he asked, turning to the thin dark man.

'Nothin' at all ; only proceed with the exercises, and if you'd be magnanimous enough to allow me to smoke, they being no females present——'

A box of Carolina Perfectos was brought in, with a

coffee urn, cognac, and liqueurs, and the three men, now calm, genial, and satisfied, gave themselves up to the comforts of tobacco. Even the youngster allowed himself to draw up a chair for his feet, and sighed in content. Coffee John finished the last drop in his glass, drew out his briar pipe, and lighted it. Then, producing a folded paper from his pocket, he raised his finger for silence, and said :

'If yer wants to know the w'y and the w'erfore of this 'ere reparst, gents, I am nar ready to give yer satisfaction o' sorts. It aynt me you're obligyted to at all ; it's a newspyper Johnnie nymed Sol Bauer who's put up for it, him as I arsked yer for to drink a 'elth to. It's a proper queer story 'ow he come to myke and bryke in this 'ere very shop o' mine, an' if yer stogies is all drawin' easy, I'll read the tyle as 'e wrote it art for me, skippin' the interduction, w'ich is personal, 'e bein' of the belief that it was me wot brought 'im luck. So 'ere goes, from w'ere 'e come darn to this plyce of a Hoctober night five years ago ;' and so saying, he opened the paper and read

The Story of the Great Bauer Syndicate.

For ten years I had been a newspaper man, and had filled almost every position from cub reporter

to managing editor, when, just a year ago, I found myself outside Coffee John's restaurant, friendless, hungry, and without a cent to my name. Although I had a reputation for knowing journalism from A to *Z*, I had been discharged from every paper in the city. The reason was good enough ; I was habitually intemperate, and therefore habitually unreliable. I did not drink, as many journalists do, to stimulate my forces, but it was physically impossible for me to remain sober for more than two weeks at a time.

I had that day been discharged from the *Tribune* for cause. The President of the S. P. Company was on his way to San Francisco, and it was necessary for our paper to get ahead of our contemporaries and obtain the first interview. I was told to meet the magnate at Los Angeles. I loitered at a saloon till I was too late for the train, and then decided I would meet my man down the line at Fresno. The next train south left while I was still drinking. I had time, however, to catch the victim on the other side of the Bay, and interview him on the ferry, but he got in before I roused myself from my dalliance with the grape. Then, trusting to sheer bluff, I hurried into the office, called up two stenographers, dictated a fake interview containing important news, and rushed the thing on the press. The next day the President of the railway repudiated

the whole thing, and I was summarily given the sack. Nevertheless, it so happened that almost the whole of what I had predicted came true within the year.

To resume. I had celebrated the bad luck in my usual manner, and had just sense enough to wish to clear my head with black coffee. So, trusting to my slight acquaintance with Coffee John and more to his well-known generosity, I entered his place, and for the first time in my life asked for what I could not pay for. I was not disappointed. A coffee and a plate of doughnuts were handed me without comment or advice.

As I was making my meal in the back part of the little restaurant, three men, one after the other, came and sat down at my table. In the general conversation that ensued, I found that one was a tramp printer whose boast it was to have worked and jumped his board bill in nearly every State in the Union, one was a book agent who had been attempting to dispose of the Life of U. S. Grant, and the third was an insurance solicitor who had failed to make good the trade's reputation for acumen.

A little talk developed the fact that all four of us were out of funds, and ready for anything that promised to keep the wolf from the door. Then,

with a journalist's instinct for putting three and one together, an idea came to me by which we could all find a way out of the dilemma.

For it so happened that one of the *Herald's* periodical upheavals had occurred that very day, and a general clean-up was being effected in the office. The city editor, after a stormy interview with his chief, had resigned, and had carried with him four of the best men on the staff. Other reporters who had taken his part had also been let go, and the city room of the *Herald* was badly in need of assistance. It was very likely that any man who could put up any kind of a pretence to knowing the ropes would stand a fair chance for a situation.

My plan was this: each of the three men was to apply for a situation as reporter on the *Herald*, and, if accepted, was to report the next day for his assignment, and then come immediately to me for instructions. I was to give them all the necessary information as to obtaining the material, and when they had brought me the facts, write out the story for them to hand in.

The three men agreed enthusiastically to the venture, and I spent the evening in coaching them in the shop-talk and professional terms they would need. You cannot teach a man what 'news' is in

one sitting—a man has to have a nose trained to smell it and a special gift for determining its value; but I described the technical meaning of 'a story' and 'covering' a detail. I told them to keep their eyes open, and gave many examples of how it often happened that a reporter, when sent out on a little 'single-head' story, would, if he were sharp, get a hint that could be worked up into a front-page 'seven-column scarehead.' There is, of course, no royal road to journalism, but there are short-cuts that can be learned. I gave them points on the idiosyncrasies of the new man at the city desk, for I knew him well, and I provided each of them with a yarn about his supposed previous place. One, I believe, was to have worked on the St. Louis *Post Dispatch* under George Comstock; one had done special writing on the Minneapolis *Globe;* and so on, for I knew a lot about all the papers in the East, and I fixed my men so they couldn't easily be tripped up on their autobiographies.

They went down to the *Herald* office that night, and after I had waited an hour or so I had the satisfaction of hearing that all three of my pupils had been accepted. It was agreed that each of them was to give me half his salary, and so I had a fair show of earning a man and a half's wages as President of the Great Bauer Syndicate.

At one o'clock the next afternoon I sat down in Coffee John's and waited for my subordinates to report. As each man came in, I gave him minute instructions as to the best possible way of obtaining his information. There was not a trick of the trade I didn't know, and I had never been beaten by any paper in town. I had succeeded in obtaining interviews at two in the morning from persons avowedly hostile to my sheet, I had got photographs nobody else could get, and I had made railroad officials talk after an accident. Without conceit, I may claim to be a practical psychologist, and where most men know only one way of getting what they want, I know four. My men had little excuse for failing to obtain their stories, and they walked out of Coffee John's like automata that I had wound up for three hours.

They returned between four and five o'clock, gave me the information they had secured, and while they reported to the city editor, received instructions as to writing the story, and got their evening's assignment, I wrote the articles at railroad speed. I could tell as well as any city editor how much space the stories were worth, and wrote the headlines accordingly. If by any chance the editor's judgment were not the same as mine, it took but a few minutes to cut the thing down or pad it to any

length, and my men took the copy back before they went out on the next detail. Meanwhile I had given them their new directions, and when they turned up, towards ten and eleven at night, I had the whole batch of writing to do again. It was a terrific pace for any one man to keep up, and I doubt if anyone else in San Francisco could have kept the three busy and turned out first-class work.

This went on for fifteen days, during which time I made Coffee John's joint my headquarters. That was the only place where I could hope to keep sober working at such high pressure; for I didn't dare trust myself in a saloon, and I couldn't afford to hire an office. The amount of black coffee I consumed made me yellow for a year. Whether Coffee John wondered what I was up to or not I never knew; at any rate, he asked no questions and made no objections.

The Great Bauer Syndicate went merrily, and the members, with the exception of the president, earned their salaries easily enough. If the job were especially difficult or delicate, I went out and got the story myself. At the end of the first week we drew our pay, and divided it according to the agreement; but there were indications that my men thought they were getting clever enough to handle the work alone. If it hadn't been that while I was

waiting for them to come in I managed to write several columns of 'space,' faked and otherwise, that they could turn in and get paid for without any work at all, I would have had trouble in holding them down to their contracts. Except for this, the prospects were bright for the prettiest little press syndicate that ever fooled a city editor. We made a record for two weeks, and then came the crash.

I had been as sober as a parson for fifteen long weary days, beating my record by twenty-four hours. I had drenched myself in black coffee, and turned out copy like a linotype machine, keyed up to a tension so tight that something had to give way. You can easily imagine what happened. One Monday night, after the last batch of copy had been delivered and I had drawn down my second week's pay, I relapsed into barbarism and cast care to the winds.

I started down the line, headed for Pete Dunn's saloon at 1 a.m., with thirty dollars in my pocket, and I found myself on Wednesday morning at the Cliff House with an unresponsive stranger whom I was imploring to call me 'Sollie.' What had happened to me in the interim I never cared to investigate. But the Great Bauer Syndicate was out of business.

It seems that my three subordinates showed up

as usual on Tuesday afternoon, and after waiting for me awhile, they attempted to cover their assignments without my help. The insurance solicitor got all twisted up, and never came back; the printer threw up his job when he failed to find me on his return. But the book-agent had grown a bit conceited by this time, and thought he was as good as anybody in the business. So he sat down and wrote out his story, and by what they say about it, it must have been something rich enough to frame.

He had picked up a good many stock newspaper phrases, like 'repaired to the scene of the disaster,' and 'a catastrophe was imminent,' and 'the last sad offices were rendered,' and 'a life hung in the balance,' and such rot, and he had a literary ambition that would have put the valedictorian of a female seminary to the blush. He had an idea that my work was crude and jerky, so he melted down a lot of ineffable poetical bosh into paragraphs hot enough to set the columns afire. As for the story, you couldn't find it for the adjectives. He may have been a wonder at selling the Life of U. S. Grant, but he couldn't write English for publication in a daily paper.

When he turned the stuff in, the city editor gave a look at it, put about three swift questions to him,

and the cat was out of the bag. It took no time at all to sweat the story out of him, and they sent that book-agent downstairs so quickly that he never came back. The whole office went roaring over the way I'd done the paper, and the first thing I knew I was sent for, and the managing editor told me that if I'd take the Keely cure for four months he'd give me the Sunday editor's place, and forget the episode. The time I put in at Los Gatos taking chloride of gold was the darkness that preceded my financial dawn. When I graduated, I hated the smell of whisky so much that I couldn't eat an ordinary baker's mince-pie. Six months after that I was sent for by the New York *Gazette*, where I am now drawing a salary that makes my life in San Francisco seem insipid.

Coffee John folded the document carefully, and restored it to his pocket with consideration.

'That's the wye 'e wrote it darn for me, and I've read it every year sence. You see, gents, Sol Bauer, havin' gort the idea I was, in a wye, the means of his restoration to respeckability, an' by wye of memorizink them three bums, has myde a practice o' sendin' me a cheque an' a smorl gift every year, with instructions to celebryte the 'appy event by givin' the best dinner money can buy to the fust

three blokes as turns up here after 8.30 on the thirteenth dye of October, an' I sye it's 'andsome of 'im. Nar, I propose that we all drink 'is very good 'ealth again, after w'ich them as is agreeable will tell 'is own story for the mutual pleasure of the assembled company 'ere present.'

The three men agreed, and filled their glasses to the grateful memory of Solomon Bauer.

CHAPTER II

JAMES WISWELL COFFIN, THIRD

'NAR, young man,' said Coffee John, pointing the stem of his pipe at the lad in the red sweater, 'seein' we've all agreed to testify, s'pose yer perceed to open the ball. You come in first, an' you talk first. I ain't no fly cop, but it strikes me you're a bit different from the rest of us, though we're all different enough, the Lord knows. Yer jacket fits yer, an' thet alone is enough to myke yer conspicus in this 'ere shop. I see a good many men parss in an' art from be'ind the carnter, but I don't see none too many o' the likes o' you. If I ain't mistook, you'll be by wye o' bein' wot I might call a amatoor at this 'ere sort o' livin', an' one as would find a joke w'erever 'e went. You'd larff at a bloomin' corpse, you would, an' flirt with Queen Victoria, or I ain't seen the likes o' your breed afore. You'll never grow up, young fellar—I give yer thet stryte, before yer even open yer marth.

'But wot I cawn't figger art,' he continued, 'is w'y yer jumped at the sight of a bunch o' ord'n'ry yeller banannas. I've seen 'em eat with their bloomin' knives, an' comb their w'iskers with their bloomin' forks; but this 'ere is a new one on me, an' it gets my gyme. I'm nar ready to listen.'

'Even so,' said the youth. 'Then I shall now proceed to let the procession of thought wriggle, the band play, and the bug hop. The suspense, I know, is something terrible, so I spare your anxiety.' And with this flare he began to relate

The Story of the Harvard Freshman.

When I received a cordial invitation from the Dean to leave Harvard the second time—that time it was for setting off ten alarm-clocks at two-minute intervals in chapel—the governor flew off the handle. My fool kid-brother, that was to side-track the letter from the Faculty, got mixed on his signals, and the telegram that the old man sent back nearly put the Cambridge office out of business. He said that I had foozled my last drive, and although a good cane is sometimes made out of a crooked stick, he washed his hands of me, and would I please take notice that the remittances were therewith discontinued.

I noticed. After I'd settled up and given my farewell dinner to the Institute, where they were sorry to lose me because I was playing a cyclone game on the Freshman eleven, I had ninety-eight dollars and twelve hours to leave the college yard. Thinking it over, it struck me the keenest way for me to get my money's worth was to go out and take a sub-graduate course as a hobo—do the Wyckoff act minus the workers and the prayer-meetings. I wasn't going to beg my meals—there was where the pride of the Coffins stuck out—but I was willing to stand for the rest, dust, rust, and cinders. As a dead-head tourist, ninety-eight bones would feed me and sleep me for quite a space. I swung on at South Boston for my first lesson in brakebeams, and tumbled off mighty sick at Lowell.

It's a long tale, with hungry intervals, until I found myself in the pound at Peru, Illinois, for smashing a fresh brakeman and running up against the constabulary. The police judge of that hustling little Western centre is paid out of the fines that he collects. It is a strange coincidence that when I was searched I had forty-seven twenty on my person, and my fine for vagrancy and assault came to forty dollars, with seven-twenty costs. The man was a hard-shell deacon.

Next morning, when I crawled out of the under-

ground Pullman at Louisville, I was watching Senator Burke's racing-stables come in, and I was hungry enough to digest a sand-car. 'It being work or beg,' I says, 'here's where I break the ethics of my chosen profession and strike for a job.' There was nothing doing until one of the hands mentioned for a joke that a waiter was wanted for the dining-room where the nigger jockeys ate. 'It is only a matter of sentiment,' said I to myself, 'and my Massachusetts ancestors fit and bled and died to make freedom out of the sons of Ham. Here goes for a feed.' And I took the place, collecting a breakfast in advance, and threw chow for three meals at coloured gentlemen that buried it with their knives. 'If I am the prodigal son,' says I to myself, 'these are the swine all right.'

There was a black exercise boy in the bunch, who played the prize Berkshire hog. He was rather big for a man about the stables. Superstition held that he could lick everything of his weight on earth, and he acted as though he were a front-page feature in the *Police Gazette.* During the fourth meal he got gay over my frank, untrammelled way of passing soup. By way of repartee, I dropped the tray, tucked up my apron, and cleared for action.

First, I wiped off one end of the table with him, the way your mother handles crumbs. Then I

hauled him out into the light of day, so as not to muss the dining-room, and stood him up against the pump, and gave him the countercheck quarrelsome. He was long on life and muscle, but short on science, and he swung miles wide. After I'd ducked and countered two of them, he dropped his head all of a sudden. I saw what was coming. I got out of range, and let him butt, and when he came in my zone of fire I gave him the knee good and proper. His face faded into a gaudy ruin.

The superintendent came down to restore order, and saw how merrily I jousted. He was a bit strict, but he was a true Peruvian in some ways, and he loved a scrapper. That night I got a hurry call to the office, and walked away James Wiswell Coffin, third, anointed assistant rubber. After the season was over at Louisville we pulled up stakes and hiked on to Chicago, following the circuit. When we moved, I was raised to night watchman—forty and found. Nothing happened until close to the end of the season at Chicago, except that I ate regularly. Money was easy in that part. Whenever I picked up any of it, I looked around for good things in the betting. Without springing myself any, I cleaned up a little now and then, and when the big chance came I was two hundred dollars to the good.

This is the way that Fate laid herself open, so that

I could get in one short-arm jab ere she countered hard. It was the night before a big race, really more important to us than the Derby. Everyone around the stables was bug-house with it. Before I went out on watch, the superintendent—his name was Tatum, please remember that—lined me up, and told me that he'd have me garrotted, electrocuted, and crucified if there was a hair so much as crossed on either of our entries. We had two of them—Maduro and Maltese. The pair sold at six to five. Outside and in, it looked as though the old man hadn't had a Cup nailed so hard for years. The trainers were sleeping beside the ponies, but I was supposed to look in every half-hour to see how things were coming on. At midnight Tatum came round and repeated his remarks, which riled me a bit, and Maduro's trainer said that he thought he would turn in for a little sleep.

The next call, for Heaven knows what nutty reason, I got back to Maduro's stall a quarter ahead of the hour. There was about a teaspoonful of light coming through the cracks. I got an eye to a knot-hole, and saw things happening. There was Maduro trussed like a rib roast, and trying to jump, and there was the trainer—'Honest Bob,' they used to call him—poking a lead-pencil up her nose. He said a swear word, and began to feel around in the

mare's nostril, and pulled out a sponge. He squeezed it up tight, and stuffed it back, and began to poke again. That was the cue for my grand entry.

'Good-morning,' I said through the hole; 'you're sleeping bully.'

I was cutting and sarcastic, because I knew what was up. The sponge game—stuff it up a horse's nose and he can walk and get around the same as ever, but when he tries to run he's a grampus.

He was too paralyzed even to chuck the pencil. He stood there with his hands down and his mouth open.

'Oh, hello!' he said, when his wind blew back; 'I was just doctoring the mare to make her sleep.'

All this time I'd been opening the latch of the door, and I slid into the corner.

'Oh, sure,' said I, displaying my gun so that it would be conspicuous, but not obtrusive; 'I suppose that you'd like to have me send for Mr. Tatum. He'd like to hold her little hoof and bend above her dreams,' said I.

'Oh, there's no necessity for bothering him,' said Honest Bob in a kind of conciliatory way, and edging nearer to me all the time. I might have been caught if I hadn't noticed that his right hand was lifted just a bit, with the two first fingers spread. I learned that game with the alphabet. You slide

in on your man, telling him all the time that he is your lootsy-toots, until you get your right in close, and then you shoot that fork into both his lamps. He can neither see nor shoot nor hit until his eyes clear out, which gives you time to do him properly. Honest Bob was taking a long chance.

I guarded my eyes, and shoved the gun in his face. I felt like old Nick Carter.

'How much do you want?' said he all of a sudden.

'The honour of the Coffins never stoops to bribery,' said I; 'but if you'll tell me what's going to win to-morrow, I'll talk business. If the tip's straight, I forget all about this job.'

'Early Rose,' he said.

'The devil you say!' said I.

Early Rose was selling at forty to one. I gave it to him straight and perpendicular that if his tip were crooked I would peach, and put him out of business for life. He swore that he was in the know. For the rest of that night I omitted Maduro's stall, and did some long-distance thinking.

I could see only one way out of it. Maduro loses sure, thinks I, and whether it's to be Early Rose or not, there's an investigation coming that involves little Jimmy Third. What's the matter with winning a pot of money, and then disappearing in

a self-sacrificing spirit, so that Honest Bob can lay it all to me ? I was sick of the job, anyway.

What happened next day has passed into the history of the turf, but the thing that wasn't put into the papers was the fact that I was in on Early Rose with one hundred and ninety plunks at twenty-five to one. He staggered home at the head of a groggy bunch that wilted at the three-quarters. I sloped for the ring, and drew down $4,750. Just what happened, and whether the nags were all doped or not, I don't know to this day ; but there must be more in this horse-racing business than doth appear to the casual débutante.

Two minutes after I left the bookies I was headed for the Overland train. Just as we pulled out, I looked back, proud like a lion for a last gloat at Chicago. There on the platform was that man Tatum with a gang from the stables, acting as though he were looking for someone. In the front of the mob, shaking his fist and doing the virtuous in a manner that shocked and wounded, was Honest Bob. I took the tip, dropped off two stations down the line, doubled back on a local to a child's-size Illinois town, and rusticated there three days.

I'd had time to think, and this was the way it looked. Where the broad Pacific blends with the land of freedom and railway prospecti, the Mistress

of the Pacific dreams among her hills. Within her broad harbour float the mighty fleets of commerce, and beneath her shades lie two jerk-water universities with building-plans and endowments. It occurred to me that I'd better make two packages of my money. One of eight hundred was to get me out to San Francisco, and show me the town in a manner befitting my birth and station ; the other was to transport me like a dream through one of the aforesaid universities on a thousand a year, showing the co-eds what football was like. With my diplomas and press notices tucked under my arms, I would then report at the residence of James Wiswell Coffin, second, at South Framingham, and receive a father's blessing, with stuffed veal on the side.

By the time I'd landed at this Midway Plaisance and bought a few rags, the small package looked something like four hundred dollars. It was at this stage of the game that I met the woman starring as the villainess in this weird tale. We went out to the Emeryville track together. Here is where the orchestra begins to play 'Moonlight Fancies,' and you turn on the red calcium. All of my four hundred that I didn't pay for refreshments I lost the first day out.

But that makes no never mind, says I to myself ; it's easy to go through a California university on

seven-fifty per, and, besides, a college course ought to be three years instead of four ; so I dipped into the big pile. Let us drop the quick curtain. When it rises, I am centre stage in the Palace Hotel, ninety-dollar overcoats and pin-checked cutaways to right and left, kitzenjammer and a week's bill hovering in the flies above me ; and strapped. I gets up, puts my dress-suit into its case, tucks in a sweater and a bunch of ties, tells the clerk that I am going away for a day or so, and will leave my baggage until I can come back and settle, and walks into the cold world.

The dress-suit brought eight dollars. That fed me and slept me in a little room on Third Street for a week. After dragging the ties through every pawn-shop from Tar Flat to the Iron Works, I got a dollar for them. They cost twenty. Next was the suit-case—two and a half. The third day after that I had dropped the last cent, and was leaving my lodgings two jumps ahead of the landlord, a great, coarse Swede.

I hadn't a thing but the clothes on my back. I was wearing this sweater, and under it, in case of emergencies, I kept the collar and tie and egg-shell shirt that I wore when I left the hotel. In a vacant basement on Folsom Street I found a front step invisible to the naked eye of the cop on the beat.

There I took lodgings. I got two meals by trading my trousers for a cheaper pair and twenty cents to boot from the Yiddish man in the shop above. When that was gone, I roamed this grand old city for four days and three nights, and never did such a vulgar thing as eat. That's no child's dream of a star.

The fourth day was a study in starvation. Dead serious, joshing aside, that was about as happy a time as I ever put in. I forgot that I was hungry and broke, and up against the real thing. 'All mimsy were the borogoves.' I saw myself like some other guy that I had a line on, chasing about 'Frisco in that fix. I myself was warm and comfortable, and having a dreamy sort of a time wandering about, lamping sort of grinful at the darned fools that hadn't any better sense than to work.

I was strolling down Kearney Street listening to the birds singing through the haze, when something that wore scrambled whiskers and an ash-barrel hat advised me to go down to Broadway wharf and take a chance with the fruit-bums. He steered me the proper course, and I smoked a pipe along Broadway. There was the wharf all right, and there was a whole cargo of bananas being lifted on a derrick and let down. Once in a while one would drop ; the crowd underneath would make a jump and fight for it. I

stood there wondering if I really wanted any bananas, or if it was worth while to eat, seeing that I'd have to do it again, and was now pretty well broken of the habit, when a big, scaly bunch got loose from the stem, and began to shake and shiver. I got under it and made a fair catch, and went through the centre with it the way I used to go through the Yale Freshman line. There were seventeen bananas, and I ate them all.

Next thing I began to feel thirsty. So I marched up to that Coggswell joke on Ben Franklin somewhere in the dance-hall district, and foundered myself with water. After that I crawled into a packing-box back of a wood yard, and for two days I was as sick as Ham, Shem and Japhet the second day out on the Ark.

When I got better I was hungry again. It was bananas or nothing. I found them carting off the cargo, and managed to pick up quite a load in one way or another. After dark I took up two piles, and salted them down back of my packing-box. Next day, pretty weak yet, I stayed at home and ate bananas. When the new moon shone like a green banana peel in the heavens of the next night, I never wanted to see a banana as long as I lived. Nathless, me lieges, they were all that I had. After breakfast next morning I shook my clothes out,

hid the sweater, and put on my collar to go down town. On the way I couldn't look at the bananas in the fruit stands. At the end of the line I bumped into a big yellow building with arches on its front, and a sign out: 'Football players—please see Secretary.'

I looked, and saw that it was the Y.M.C.A. 'Aha,' says I, 'maybe I dine.'

I sang a good spiel to the secretary. They were getting up a light-weight team, and wanted talent. Thanking the gods that I was an end instead of a centre, I spun him some dream about the Harlem Y.M.C.A. He said, report that afternoon. I went back, choked down ten bananas for strength, and got out on the field in a borrowed suit. They lined up for only five minutes, but that was time enough for me to show what *I* could do.

I waited after the game to hear someone say 'Training table,' and no one peeped. I stood around making myself agreeable, and letting them know that I was a stranger in a strange land without good home influences, and they said come around to the Wednesday socials, but no one asked me to say grace at his humble board. By the time I had washed up and got back home to the packing-box, I had such a fifty horse-power hunger that I simply had to eat more bananas. I swore then and there

that it was my finish. Why, the taste of them was so strong that my tongue felt like a banana-peel.

After dinner I hiked back to the Y.M.C.A., seeing that it was my only opening, and began to study the *Christian Advocate* in the reading-room. And the first thing that I saw was a tailor-made that looked as though it had been ironed on her, and a pair of coffee-coloured eyes as big as doughnuts. 'A woman to change luck,' says I; 'let us see if we can discover an affinity.'

As I rubbered at her over the paper, I saw her try to open one of the cases where they kept the silver cups. That was my cue. It wasn't two minutes before I was showing her around like a director. I taught her some new facts about the Y.M.C.A., all right, all right. She was a *Tribune* woman doing a write-up of the place, and she caught my game proper. We'd got to the gym., and I was giving the place all the world's indoor athletic records, when she turned those lamps on me and said:

'You don't belong here.'

'I don't?' says I. 'Don't I strike you for as good a little Y.M.C.A.-ser as there is in the business? Ain't the spiel all right?'

She looked me over as though she were wondering if I were somebody's darling, and said, in a serious way:

'My mother and I have supper at home after I am through with my work. I am leaving early to-night. My brother's just come on from the East, and I'd like to have you meet him. Could you join us at ten this evening?'

Realizing the transparency of that excuse for a lady-like poke-out, I tried to get haughty and plead a previous engagement; but the taste of bananas rose up in my mouth, and made me half-witted. When we parted, she had me dated and doddering over the prospects. Then I raised my hand to my chin and felt the stubble. 'A shave is next in order,' says I. So I stood at the door and scanned the horizon. Along comes the football captain. If he were in the habit of shaving himself, I gambled that I would dine with a clean face. I made myself as pleasant as possible. Pretty soon he began to shift feet.

'Going down the street?' said I. 'Well, I'll walk along.' We got to his lodgings. 'Going in?' said I. 'Well, I'd like to see your quarters;' and I walked in. 'Pretty rooms. That's a nice safety-razor you have there; how do you strop it?' He showed me, kind of wondering, and I said, 'How's your shaving-soap?' He brought it. 'Looks good,' said I, heading for the washstand. I jerked in a jet of cold water, mixed it up, lathered

my face, and began to shave, handing out chin-music all the time about Social Settlement work. He said never a word. It was a case of complete paralysis. When I had finished I begged to be excused. He hadn't even the strength to see me to the door.

Oh, the joy of walking to Jones Street, realizing with every jump that I was going to have something to take the taste of bananas out of my mouth! I got to playing wish with myself like a seminary girl. I had just decided to back a tenderloin rare-to-medium, Bass ale, and tartellen with black coffee for dessert, when I bumped on her house and the cordial welcome. It was one of those little box-flats where the dining-room opens by a folding-door off the living-room. I could see a white tablecloth and real silver. I watched it with my mouth watering, the way a bull-pup eyes a hot joint.

'Can you wait here just a minute?' said the girl with the doughnut orbs; 'I want you to meet my brother.'

She was gone longer than I expected. She was a thoroughbred to leave such a hobo as me alone with the silver. It got so that I just had to look at the scene of the festivities. It was there all right, a genuine Flemish quarter-sawed oak dining-table, all set and wound up, and me going to have my first

square meal for ten days. About that time I heard two voices in the back of the house. One was the girl's, and the other was a baritone that sounded mighty familiar. I explored further, and the next clue was a photograph on the mantel that lifted my hair out of its sockets and brought all the bananas up in my throat.

It was signed 'Your loving brother John,' and it was the picture of John Tatum, the manager of Burke's stables, who wanted my life, my liberty, and my pursuit of happiness.

I saw my dinner dwindling in the distance. I saw myself breakfasting on bananas, and, says I, 'Not on your hard luck!' I wouldn't swipe the silver, but by all the gods of hunger, if there were a scrap to eat in that dining-room I was going to have it. I ran through the sideboard—nothing but salt, pepper, vinegar, and mustard. China-closet, nothing but dishes. There was only one more place in the whole room where grub could be kept. That was a sort of ticket-window arrangement in the far corner. Footsteps coming. 'Last chance!' says I, and breaks for it like a shot. I grabbed the handle, and tore it open.

And there was a large, fine plate of rich, golden, mealy bananas!

CHAPTER III

PROFESSOR VANGO

'YER was mixed up in a narsty piece o' business,' said Coffee John, after the Freshman had concluded his tale, 'an' it strikes me yer gort no more'n wort yer bloomin' well desarved. I don't rightly know w'ether yer expect us to larff or to cry, but I'm inclined to fyver a grin w'enever possible, as 'elpin' the appetite, an' thereby bringin' in tryde. So I move we accept the kid's apology for bein' farnd in me shop, an' perceed with the festivities o' the evenink. I see our friend 'ere with the long finger-nyles is itchin' to enliven the debyte, an' I'm afryde if we don't let 'im 'ave 'is sye art, e'll bloomin' well bust with it.' He looked the thin, black-eyed stranger over calmly and judicially. 'You'll be one as lives by 'is wits, an' yet more from the lack of 'em in other people, especially femiles,' the proprietor declared. 'You're one o' ten tharsand in this tarn as picks up easy money, if so be they's no questions arsked. But if I ain't mistook, yer've

come a cropper, an' yer ain't much used to sweatin' for yer salary. But that don't explyne w'y yer 'ad to tumble into this plyce like the devil was drivin' yer, an' put darn a swig o' 'ot coffee to drarn yer conscience like. Clay Street wan't afire, nor yet in no dynger o' bein' flooded, so I'm switched if I twig yer gyme !'

'Well, I *have* got a conscience,' began the stranger, 'though I'm no worse than many what make simulations to be better, and I never give nobody nothin' they didn't want and willin' to pay for, and why shouldn't I get it as well as any other party? Seein' you don't know any of the parties, and with the understandin' that all I say is in confidence between friends, professional like, I'll tell you the misfortunes that have overcame me.' So he began

The Story of the Ex-medium.

I am Professor Vango, trance, test, business, materializin', sympathetic, harmonic, inspirational, and developin' medium and independent slate-writer. Before I withdrew from the profession, them as I had comforted and reunited said that I was by far the best in existence. My tests was of the sort that gives satisfaction, and convinces even the most sceptical. My front parlour was thronged

every Sunday and Tuesday evening with the most genteel and elegant ladies and gentlemen.

When I really learned my powers I was a palm and card reader. Madam Auguste, the psychic card-reader and Reno Seeress, give me the advice that put me in communication. She done it after a joint readin' we give for the benefit of the Astral Seers' Protective Union.

'Vango,' she says—I was usin' the name Vango already; it struck me as real tasty—'Vango, you're wastin' your talents. These is the days when men speak by inspiration. You got genius, but you ain't no palmist.'

'Why ain't I?' I says, knowin' all the time that they was somethin' wrong; 'don't I talk as good as any?'

'You're a genius,' says she, 'and you lead where others follow. Your idea of tellin' every woman that she can write stories if she tries is one of the best ever conceived; but if you don't mind me sayin' it as one professional to another, it's your face that's wrong.'

'My face?' says I.

'Your face, and your hands, and your shape, and the balance of your physicality,' says she. 'They want big eyes—brown is best, but blue will do—and lots of looks and easy love-makin' ways that

you can hang a past to, and I'm frank to say that you haven't got 'em. You have got platform talents, and you'll be a phenomena, where you can't get near enough to 'em to hold hands. Test seances is the future of this business. Take a few developin' sittin's, and you'll see.'

For the time disappointment and chagrin overcome me. Often and often, since, I have said that sorrow is a means of development for a party. That's where I learnt it. Next year I was holdin' test seances in my own room, and makin' spirit photographs, with my pardner, for ample renumeration. Of course, I made my mistakes, but I can assert without fear of successful contradiction that I brought true communications as often as any of 'em.

Once I sized up a woman that wore black before I had asked the usual questions—which is a risky thing to do, and no medium that values a reputation will attempt it—and told her about her husband that had passed out and give a message; and she led me on, and wrote me up for them very papers that I was advertisin' in, and almost ruined my prospecks. You get such scoffers all the time, only later on you learn to look out and give 'em rebukes from the spirits. It ain't no use tryin' to get ahead of us, as I used to tell the people at my seances that

thought that I was a collusion, because they've only got theirselves, but we've got ourselves and the spirits besides.

It wasn't long in the course of eventualities before I was ordained by the Spirit Psychic Truth Society and elected secretary of the union, and gettin' my percentages from test and trance meetin's at Pythian Hall. I was popular with the professionals, which pays, because mediums as a class is a little nervous, and, not to speak slanderous of a profession that contains some of the most gifted scientists, a set of knockers.

Only I wasn't satisfied. I was ambitious in them days, and I wanted to make my debutt in materializin', which takes a hall of your own, and a apparatus, and a special circle for the front row, but pays heavy on the investment. Try every way I could, with developin' circles and private readin's, and palms extra, I could never amass the funds for one first-class spirit and a cabinet, which ought to be enough to start on. Then one night—it was a grand psychic reunion and reception to our visitin' brothers from Portland—*she* come to the circle.

I united with my other functionaries that of assistant-editor of *Unseen Hands*, and we stigmatized it afterward as the grandest demonstration of hidden forces ever seen on this hemisphere. It was the

climax to my career. I was communicatin' beautiful, and fortune favoured my endeavours. When I pumped 'em, they let me see that which they had concealed, and when I guessed I guessed with amazin' accuracy. I told a Swede the name of his sweetheart on the other plane, and the colour of her hair, and how happy she was, and how it was comin' out all right, and guessed that her name was Tina, and guessed right the first trial. I recollect I was tellin' him he was a psychie, and didn't he sometimes feel an influence he couldn't account for? and hadn't he ever tried to establish communication with them on the spirit plane? and all he needed was a few developin' sittin's—doin' it neat and professional, you know, and all the other mediums on the platform acquiescin', when a woman spoke up from the back of the room. That was the first time that ever I seen her.

She was a middle-sized, fairish sort of woman, in mournin', which I hadn't comprehended, or I'd 'a found the article that she sent up for me to test her influence by long before. As soon as she spoke, I knew she'd come to be comforted. She was a tidy sort of a woman, and her eyes was dark, sort of between a brown and a black. Her shape was nice and neat, and she had a straightish sort of a nose with a curve into it, the sort that means dead

easy. I seen that she had rings on her fingers, and was dressed real tasty, and right there it come to me, just like my control sent it, that a way was openin' for me to get my cabinet and a stock of spirits.

'Will you please read my article?' she says. Bein' against the æsthetics of the profession to let a party guide you like that, Mrs. Schreiber, the Egyptian astral medium, was for rebukin' her. I superposed, because I seen my cabinet growin'.

'I was strongly drawn to the token in question,' I says; and then Mrs. Schreiber, who was there to watch who sent up what, motioned me to a locket on the table.

'When I come into the room, I seen this party with a sweet influence hoverin' over her. Ain't it a little child?' Because by that time I had her sized up.

I seen her eyes jump the way they always do when you're guided right, and I knowed I'd touched the achin' spot. While I was tellin' her about my control, and the beautiful light that was hoverin' over her, I palmed and opened the locket. I got the picture out—they're all alike, them lockets—and behind it was a curl of gold hair and the name 'Lilian.' I got the locket back on the table, and the spirits guided me to it for her test. When I

told her that the spirit callin' for her was happy in that brighter sphere, and sent her a kiss, and had golden hair, and was called Lilian in the flesh plane, she was more overcame than I ever seen a party at a seance. I told her she was a medium ; I could tell it by the beautiful dreams she had sometimes.

Right here Mrs. Schreiber shook her head, indicatin' that I was travellin' in a dangerous direction. Developin' sittin's is saved for parties when you can't approach 'em on departed dear ones. In cases like the one under consideration, the most logical course, you comprehend, is to give private test sittin's. But I knowed what I was doin'. I told her I could feel a marvellous power radiate from her, and her beautiful dreams was convincin' proof. She expressed a partiality to be developed.

When I got her alone in the sittin', holdin' her hand and gettin' her to concentrate on my eyes, she made manifest her inmost thoughts. She was a widow runnin' a lodgin'-house. Makin' a inference from her remarks, I seen that she hadn't no money laid by, but only what she earned from her boarders. The instalment plan was better than nothin'. She seized on the idea that I could bring Lilian back if I had proper conditions to work with. In four busy weeks I was enabled by her magnanimity to open a materializin' seance of my own,

with a cabinet and a self-playin' guitar, and four good spirit forms. I procured the cabinet second-hand, which was better, because the joints worked easier, and I sent for the spirits all the way to a Chicago dealer to get the best. They had luminous forms and non-duplicated faces that convinced even the most sceptical. The firm very liberally throwed in a slate trick for dark cabinets and the Fox Sisters' rappin'-table.

I took one of them luminous forms, the littlest one, and fixed it with golden curls painted phosphorescent. Mrs. Schreiber and the rest, all glad to be partakers in my good fortune, was hired to come on the front seats and join hands across whenever one of the spirits materialized too far forward toward the audience. We advertised heavy, and the followin' Sunday evenin' had the gratifaction to greet a numerous and cultured assemblage. I was proud and happy, because steppin' from plain test control to materializin' is a great raise for any medium.

Mrs. Higgins—that was her name, Mrs. Clarissa Higgins—come early all alone. I might 'a brought Lilian right away, only that would be inelegant. First we sang 'Show your Faces,' to get the proper psychic current of mutuality. Etherealizin' and a few tunes on a floating guitar was next. When my

control reassured itself, I knowed that the time had came, and let out the first ghost. A member of the Spirit Truth Society on the front seat recognised it for a dear one, and carried on real realistic and natural. I let it vanish. The next one was Little Hookah, the spirit of a Egyptian dancer that used to regale the Pharaohs in the depths of the Gazah pyramid. I touched off a music-box to accompany her for a skirt dance with her robes. I done that all myself; it was a little invention of my own, and was recognised with universal approbation.

That was the time for Lilian to manifest herself, and I done it artistic. First she rapped, and conversed with me in the spirit whisper back of the curtains. You could hear Mrs. Higgins in the audience drawin' in her breath sort of awesome.

I says for the spirit, in a little pipin' voice: 'Tell mommer not to mourn, because her lamentations hinders my materialization. The birds is singin', and it is, oh, so beautiful on this shore!'

Then, commandin' the believers on the front seats to join hands in a circle of mutuality, in order to assist the sister on the other shore to put on the astral symbols of the flesh, I materialized her nice and easy and gradual.

We was prepared for demonstrations on the part of Mrs. Higgins, so when she advanced I begun to

let it vanish, and the psychic circle of clasped hands stopped her while I done the job up good and complete. She lost conscientiousness on the shoulder of Mrs. Schreiber.

Not borin' you, gentlemen, with the details of my career, my business and religious relations with Mrs. Higgins was the beginnin' of my success. Myself and the little circle of believers that guarded the front seats from the protrusions of sceptical parties that come to scoff, and not infrequent came up as earnest inquirers after my control had passed, we lived easy on the proceeds.

Mrs. Higgins would bring tears to your eyes, she was that grateful. She repaired the place for me so it was the envy of the unsuccessful in the profession. She had it fixed with stucco like a grotto, and wax calla lilies and mottoes, and beautiful spirit paintin's—Mrs. Schreiber done them out of the air while she was under control; a hundred dollars apiece she charged—and nice curtains over the cabinet, embroidered in snakes and eyes inside of triangles and discobuluses. Mrs. Higgins capitalized the expense. Whenever we done poor business, we originated some new manifestations for Mrs. Higgins. She received ample renumeration. She seen Lilian every Tuesday and Sunday. Very semi-occasionally, when the planetary con-

ditions favoured complete manifestation, I used to let her hug Lilian and talk to her. That was a tremendous strain, involvin' the use of ice to produce the proper degree of grave cold, and my blood nearly conglomerated whenever circumstances rendered it advisable.

All human relationships draw to a close in time. After seven years of the most ideal communications between myself and Mrs. Higgins and the rest of the Psychic Truth Society, they come a time one evenin' when I seen she was missin'. Next day we received a message that she was indisposed. We sent Madame La Farge, the medical clairvoyant, to give her treatment, and word come back that them designin' relatives, that always haunt the last hours of the passin' spirit with mercenary entreaties, had complete domination over her person. I visited to console her myself, and was rebuked with insinuations that was a insult to my callin'. The next day we learned that she had passed out. We was not even admitted to participate in the funeral obsequations.

The first Sunday that she was in the spirit, Mrs. Schreiber was all for materializin' her. I favoured omittin' her, thinkin' it would be more fittin', you understand, and more genteel. But we had some very wealthy sceptics in the circle

we was tryin' to convince, and Mrs. Schreiber said they'd expect it. Against my better councils, seein' that Mrs. Higgins was a mighty fine woman, and give me my start, and I got a partiality for her, I took down my best spirit form and broadened it some, because Mrs. Higgins had got fleshy before she passed out.

After Little Hookah done her regular dance that Sunday night, I got the hymn started, and announcin' that the spirit that rapped was a dear one known to 'em all, I pulled out the new spirit that I had just fixed, and waited for the tap on the cabinet to show that all was ready. I didn't like to do it. I felt funny, like somethin' would go wrong. But I pulled the string, and then—— O God! there, in the other corner of the cabinet, was Mrs. Higgins—Mrs. Higgins holdin' her arm across the curtains, and just lookin' at me like her eyes was tearin' through me!

They seen somethin' was wrong, and Mrs. Schreiber got the robe away before they found me —they said my control was too strong, and some said I was drunk. I did get drunk, too—crazy drunk—next day, and when I come round Mrs. Schreiber tried to do cabinet work with me on the front seat, and there I seen *her*—in her corner—just like she used to sit, and I never went back.

But a man has got to eat, and when my money was gone and I wasn't as scared as I was at first, I tried to do test seances, sayin' to myself maybe she wouldn't mind that; and the first article I took up, there she was in the second row holdin'—oh, I couldn't get away of it—holdin' a locket just like she done the first night I seen her.

Then I knew I'd have to quit, and I hid from the circle—they was after me because Mrs. Schreiber couldn't make it go. I slept in the Salvation Army shelter so as not to be alone, and She let me be.

But to-day I seen a party on the street—that I used to give tests to—and he said he'd give me two bits to tell him about his mine—and I was broke and hungry, and—there she was—in the shadow by the bootblack awnin'—just lookin' and lookin'!

The little medium broke off with a tremor that made the glasses shake.

CHAPTER IV

ADMEH DRAKE

'I EXPECK yer cut off yer own nose all right,' said Coffee John. 'If the sperits of the dead do return, an' I was to come along with 'em, it sims to me I'd plye Mrs. 'Iggins' gyme, an' run abart a million o' shyster ghost-raisers art o' business in this city. I see their notices in the dyly pypers, an' it feerly mykes a man sick. The more you show 'em up, the more the people come to be gulled. 'Uman nychur is certingly rum. Lord love yer! I've been to 'em, an' I've been told me nyme was Peter, wan't it? an' if not Peter, Hennery; an' didn't I 'ave a gryte-gran'father wot died? So I did, an' I'm jolly glad 'e ain't lived to be a hundred an' forty neither. W'y is it that the sperit of a decent, Gawd-fearink woman wants to get familiar with a bloke wot wipes 'is nose on 'is arm-sleeve and chews terbacker? It's agin' reason an' nature, an' I don't go a cent on it. It's enough to myke a man commit murder coupled with improper lengwidge.'

He turned to the third man, who had made no comments on the stories.

'You're one as "'as loved an' lorst,"' he said. 'Yer look like one as is a lion with men an' a bloomin' mouse with women. You don't cyre w'ether school keeps or not, yer don't, an' I'm wonderin' why. I don't just like yer turnin' yer back on Dewey, though plenty o' Spanishers 'ave felt the syme wye. Yer gort a fist as could grip a gun-stock, an' an eye what ain't afraid to look a man in the fyce, if yer do hide 'em with specs. If yer can give a good reason for turnin' Dewey to the wall, nar's the charnce.'

The man with glasses had not winced at the plain language, nor apologized as the medium had done. He looked up and said :

'All right, pardner; if you'll stand for it, I'll tell you the truth right out.' And with this he began

The Story of the Hero of Pago Bridge.

Mine ain't a story-book yarn like yours, pardner, or a tale of spooks and phantoms like yours. You can get away from ghosts when there's other people around or it's daylight, but there's some things that you can't get away from in a thousand years, daylight or dark.

A fellow that I knew from the P. L. outfit loaned

me a story-book once by 'the Duchess,' that said something like this, only in story-book language: 'A woman is the start and finish of all our troubles.'

I always remembered that; it was a right nice idea. Many and many's the time that, thinking over my troubles and what brought me to this elegant feed—say, I could drink a washtubful of that new-fangled coffee—I've remembered those sentiments. Susie Latham, that is the finest lady in the White River country, she was the start and finish of *my* troubles.

Ever since we were both old enough to chew hay, Susie and I travelled as a team. The first time that ever I shone in society, I did it with Susie by my side. It was right good of her to go with me, seeing that I was only bound boy to old man Mullins, who brought me up and educated me, and Susie's father kept a store. But then we were too little to care about such things, me being eleven and Susie nine. It was the mum social of the First Baptist Church that I took her to. You know the sort? When the boss Sunday-school man gives the signal, you clap the stopper on your jaw tackle, and get fined a cent a word if you peep. Susie knew well enough that I had only five cents left after I got in, so what does she do but go out and sit on the porch while the talk is turned off, so as not to put me in the hole. When

they passed the grab-bag, I blew in the nickel. I got a kid brass ring with a red glass front, and gave it to her. I said that it was for us to get married with when we grew up.

'Why, Admeh Drake, I like your gall,' she said, but she took it just the same. After that Susie was my best girl, and I was her beau. I licked every fellow that said she wasn't pretty, and she stuck out her tongue to every girl that tried to jake me because I was old Mullins' bound boy. We graduated from Striped Rock Union High School together; that was where I spent the happy hours running wild among the flowers in my boyhood's happy home down on the farm. After that she went to teaching school, and I struck first principles, and punched cattle down on old Mullins' X Q X ranch. Says I to myself, 'I'll have an interest here myself some time, and then married I'll be to Susie if she'll but name the day. I had only six months before I was to be out of bound to old Mullins.

Being a darned-fool kid, I let it go at that, and wrote once in a while, and got busy learning to punch cattle. Lord love you! I didn't have much to learn, because I was raised in the saddle. There were none of them better than me, if I did have a High School education. My eyes had gone bad along back while I was in the High School, calling for spectacles.

When I first rode in gig-lamps, they used to josh me, but when I got good with the rope, and shot off-hand with the best, and took first prize for busting bronchos Fourth of July at Range City, they called me the 'Four-eyed Cow-puncher,' and I was real proud of it. I wish it was all the nickname I ever had. 'The Hero of Pago Bridge'—I wish to God——

The X Q X is seventy miles down the river from Striped Rock. Seventy miles ain't such a distance in Colorado, only I never went back for pretty near two years and a half. Then, one Christmas when we were riding fences—keeping the line up against the snow, and running the cattle back if they broke the wires and got across—I got to thinking of the holiday dances at Striped Rock, and, says I, here's for a Christmas as near home as I can get, and a sight of Susie.

The boss let me off, and I made it in on Christmas eve. The dance was going on down at Foresters' Hall. I fixed up, and took it in.

And there she was; I didn't know her for the start she'd got. Her hair, that she used to wear in two molassesy-coloured braids hanging down her back and shining in the sun, the way candy shines when you pull it, was done up all over her head. She was all pinky and whitey in the face, the way she used to be when she was a little girl. She had on a sort

of pink dress, mighty pretty, with green wassets down the front and a green dingbat around the bottom, and long—not the way it was when I saw her before. She was rushed to the corner, with every geezer in the place piled in front of her. I broke into the bunch. Everybody seemed glad to see me except Susie. She treated me like any other maverick in the herd. She hadn't even a dance left for me. Once, in 'Old Dan Tucker,' she called me out; but she'd called out every other tarantula in the White River country, so there was no hope in that. If ever a man didn't know where he was at, I was the candidate.

All that winter, riding the fence, I thought and thought. I'd been so dead sure of her that I was letting her go. Here was the principal of the High School and young Mullins that worked in the Ranchers' Bank, and Biles that owned stock in the P. L., all after her, like bronchos after a marked steer, and I was only the 'Four-eyed Cow-puncher,' thirty dollars and found. And I got bluer than the light on the snow; and then says I to myself, 'If she ain't married when spring melts, by the Lord! I'll have her.'

I'm one of those that ain't forgetting the sixteenth of February, 1898. Storm over, and me mighty glad of it. Snow all around, except where the line of

fence-rails peeked through, and the sun just blinding. I on the broncho breaking through the crust, feeling mighty good, both of us. Down in a little *arroyo*, where a creek ran in summer, was the end of my run. Away off in the snow I saw Billy Taylor, my side partner, waving his hand like he was excited. I pounded my mule on the back.

'The Maine's blown up!' he yells; 'the Maine's blown up!'

'The what?' says I, not understanding.

'The Maine—Havana harbour—war sure!' he says.

I tumbled off in the snow, while he chucked me down a bunch of Denver papers. There it was. I went as loco as Billy. Before I got back to camp, I had it all figured out—what I ought to do. I got to the foreman before noon and drew my pay, and left him cussing. Lickety-split, the cayuse—he was mine—got me to the station. I figured that the National Guard would be the first to go, and I figured right. So I telegraphed to old Captain Fletcher of Company N, at Range City, 'Have you got room for me?' And he answered me, knowing just how I stood on the ranches, 'Yes. Can you raise me twenty men to fill my company?' He didn't need to ask for men; there were plenty of them anxious enough to go, but he did need the sort of men I'd get

him. Snow be darned ! I rode for four days signing up twenty hellaroos that would leave the rough-riders standing. Into Range City I hustled them. There we waited on the town, doing nothing but live on our back pay, and drill while we waited, nineteen for glory and Spanish blood, and me for glory and the girl.

Congress got a move on at last, though we thought they never would, and the Colorado National Guard was accepted, enlisting as a body. When we were in camp together, and the medical inspector went around thumping chests, the captain gave him a little song about my eyes.

' He can't see without his glasses,' says Captain Fletcher ; ' but he can shoot all right with them on. And he raised my extra men, and he's a soldier.'

The doctor says, ' Well, I'm getting forgetful in my age, and maybe I'll forget the eye test '—which he did, as he said.

After that was Dewey and Manila Bay, and the news that the Colorado Volunteers were going to be sent to the Philippines, which everybody had studied about in the geography, but nobody remembered except that they were full of Spaniards just dying to be lambasted.

We got going at last, mustered at Denver, and they gave us a Sunday off to see our folks. You better

believe I took an early train for Striped Rock—and Susie. A hundred and five miles it was, and the trains running so that I had just two hours and twenty-five minutes in the place.

Susie wasn't at home, nor any of the Lathams. They were all in church at the Baptist meeting-house, where I gave her the grab-bag ring for kid fun. I went over there, and peeked in the door. A new sky-pilot was in the pulpit, just turned loose on his remarks. Sizing him up, I saw that he was a stem-winding, quarter-hour striking, eight-day talker, that would swell up and bust if he wasn't allowed to run down. In the third row I saw Susie's hair. There I'd come a hundred miles and more to say good-bye to her, and only two hours to spare, and there that preacher was taking my time — the time that I'd enlisted to fight three years for. It was against nature, so I signalled to the usher, and told him that Miss Susie Latham was wanted at home on important business.

The usher was one of the people that are born clumsy. The darn fool, instead of going up and prodding her shoulder, and getting her out sort of quiet, went up and told the regular exhorter who was sitting upon the platform, and the regular, instead of putting him on, told the visiting preacher. The old geezer was deaf.

'How thankful we should be, my brethren, that this hopeless eternity,' he was saying, when the regular parson broke out of his high-back chair and tapped him on the broadcloth, and began to whisper.

'Hey?' says the stranger.

'Miss Susie Latham,' says the regular preacher between a whisper and a holler.

'What about her?'

'Wanted at home'—so that you could hear him all through the church.

'Oh!' says the parson. 'Brothers and sisters, I am requested to announce that Miss Susie Latham is wanted at home on important business. That this hopeless eternity is set as a guide to our feet——' and all the rest of the spiel. And me feeling as comfortable as a lost heifer in a blizzard—forty kinds of a fool.

She came down the aisle, looking red and white by turns, with all the people necking her way. Before I'd got time to explain why I did it, her mother got nervous, thinking there must be some trouble, and came trailing out after her. Then her kid sister couldn't stand the strain, and followed suit.

That family reunion on the porch spoiled all the chance that I had to see Susie alone, because when they heard why I came, and how I was going to be Striped Rock's hero, they were for giving me a Red

Cross reception then and there. Only two hours more until train time, and the old lady had to rush me down to the house for lunch—me with the rest of my life to eat in !

But I shook her and the kid sister at last, and got Susie alone. I tried to tell her, and I couldn't. I could say that I was going to do my best, and maybe die for my country, and there I stalled and balked, her looking the other way all pretty and pink, and giving me not a word either way to bless myself with. Says I finally :

'And if I come back, I suppose that you'll be married, Susie ?'

And she says : 'No, I don't think that I'll be married when you come back. I don't think that I'll ever marry, unless he's a man that I can be proud of.'

Then she looked at me, her big eyes filling—her big eyes, coloured like the edge of the mountains after sunset. I've figured it out since that she was more than half proud of me already—me, in a clean blue suit, and the buttons shiny ; me, a ten-cent camp volunteer. And then—the old woman broke in with a bottle of Eilman's Embrocation for use in camp.

Never another chance had I that side of the station. Of course, she kissed me good-bye, but

that's only politeness for soldiers ; they all do that. So, although it was just like heaven, I knew that it didn't mean anything particular from her, because her mother did it, and her sister, and pretty darned near every other girl in Striped Rock, seeing that the news about having a real hero in town had spread.

Only, when we pulled away and I was leaning out of the window blowing kisses, being afraid to blow at Susie in special because I didn't like to give myself away, she ran out of the crowd a ways and held up her little finger to show me something over the knuckle, and pulled her hand in quick, as if nothing had happened. It was the play kid ring that I gave her out of the grab-bag, to show that I was going to marry her when I grew up.

That was the last sight of Striped Rock that I got —Susie waving at the station as far as I could see her. It made you feel queer to ride past the fences and the bunch-grass and the foothills, getting grayey-green with sage-brush, and the mountains away off all snowy on top, and know that chances were you'd never see them again. And I won't, I won't—never again.

Muster at Denver, and the train, and away we went, packed like a herd around salt, and the towns just black like a steer in fly-time with people coming out to see us pass, and Red Cross lunches every time

the train had to stop for water ; next, 'Frisco and Camp Merritt. The first time that I saw this town, gray all over like a sage-hill, made out of crazy bay-window houses with fancy-work down the front, I knew that something was going skew-gee.

The night before we went up for our final medical examination by the regular army surgeon, Captain Fletcher called me into his tent.

' Drake, how about your eyes ?' says he.

I hadn't thought of that, supposing that it could be fixed the same as it was at Range City. I told him so, and he said it couldn't, not with the regular army surgeons. But says he :

' You're a good soldier, and I got you to raise my reserves. They won't let you in if you can't pass the eye test, glasses or no glasses. If it should happen that you learned a little formula that tallies with the eye-card, you wouldn't let on that I gave it to you, I suppose ?'

' I'm good at forgetting,' I says.

' Burn it when you've learned it,' he says ; and he gave me a paper with long strings of letters on it. I learned it backwards and forwards, and so that I could begin in the middle and go both ways. I lay awake half the night saying it over.

Naked as I was born, I floated in on the examiners for my physicals. Lungs, sound as they make them

in the cow country. Weight, first class. Hearing, O.K. They whirled me, and began to point. Taking a tight squint—you see better that way—I ripped through the formula. P V X C L M N H—I can say it yet. I could just see what line on the card he was pointing at, and never a darned bit more.

They make that sort of doctor in hell. He saw me squint, and he began skipping from letter to letter all over the card. No use; I guessed, and guessed dead wrong. 'Rejected'—just business-like, as if it was a little matter like a job on a hay-press. I went out, and sat all naked on my soldier clothes—my soldier clothes that I was never going to wear any more—and covered up my head. It was the hardest jolt that I ever got—except one.

Captain Fletcher hadn't any pull; he couldn't do anything. Some of the twenty that I rounded into Range City talked about striking, they were so mad, but they couldn't do anything. I watched them sworn in next day, shuffling into the armory in new overall clothes. I stood around camp, and saw them drill. I saw them go down the streets to the transport, flowers in their gun-barrels, wreaths on their hats, and the people just whooping. I sneaked after them on to the transport, and there I broke out, and cussed the regular army and everything else. Old Fletcher saw it. He wasn't sore; he

understood. But I wish I had killed him before I let him do what he did next. He said :

' He can't be with us, boys, and it ain't his fault ; but Striped Rock is going to have its hero. I am going to be correspondent for the Striped Rock *Leader*. If we have the luck to get into a fight, he'll be the hero in my piece in the paper, and the man that gives away the snap ain't square with Company N. Here's three cheers for Admeh Drake, the hero of Company N !' he said.

When they pulled out, people were cheering them, and they were cheering me. It heartened me up considerably, or else I couldn't have stood to see them sliding past Telegraph Hill into the stream and me not there.

First, I was for writing to Susie and telling her all about it, but I just couldn't. I put it off, saying that I'd go back and tell her all about it myself, and I went to mooning around camp like a ghost. And then along came a copy of the *Leader* that settled it —all about the big feed that they gave the regiment at Honolulu, and how Admeh Drake had responded for the men of Company N. Captain Fletcher was getting in his deadly work. It said that I was justly popular, and my engagement to one of Striped Rock's fairest daughters was whispered. It treated me like I was running for Congress on the *Leader*

ticket. I began to wonder if I saw a way to Susie.

After they got to the Islands, I dragged the cascos through the surf, and rescued a squad of Company N from drowning. All that was in the *Leader*. The night they scrapped in front of the town I stood and cheered on a detachment when they faltered before the foe. After they got to Manila, and did nothing but lay around, Captain Fletcher had me rescue a man from a fire.

After that I began to get next to myself, knowing that I'd have done best to stop it at the start, and go straight back to Striped Rock. I'd been a darned fool to put it off so long. Now I could never go back and face the joshing. I wrote the Captain a letter about it, and he never paid any attention. Instead of that, he sent me back a bunch of her letters. Knowing how things stood, what I was doing, and what she thought I was doing, I could hardly open them. They made me feel as small as a buckshot in a barrel. They hinted about being proud of me, and prayed that I'd come home alive ; and I knew, in spite of being ashamed, that I had her.

Next thing, the natives got off the reservation ; there's where Cap. Fletcher went clean plumb loco. One day the *Leader* came out with circus scare-heads about 'The Hero of Pago Bridge.' They printed

my biography and a picture of me. It didn't look like me, but it was a nice picture. I'd broke through a withering fire, and carried a Kansas lieutenant across to safety after he had been helplessly wounded —and never turned a hair.

What was I doing all that time ? Laying pretty low. I was afraid to leave town because I wanted to keep an eye on the *Leader*, which was coming regularly to the Public Library, and afraid to get a regular daylight job for fear that somebody from Striped Rock would come along and see me. I was nearly busted when I ran on to old Doctor Morgan, the Indian root specialist. He gave me a job as his outside man ; all I had to do was to hang around watching for sick-looking strays from the country. You know the lay. I told them how Doctor Morgan had cured me of the same lingering disease, and how I was a well man thanks to his secrets, babying them along kind of easy until they went to the Doctor. He did the rest, and I collected twenty-five per cent.

Striped Rock acted as though I was the mayor. They named their new boulevard Drake Way. Come Fourth of July, they set me up alongside of Lincoln. They talked about running me for the Assembly. There came another bunch of her letters —I had answered the last lot that Cap. sent, mailed them all the way to the Philippines to be forwarded,

just to gain time—they were heaven mixed with hell.

The regiment was coming back in a week, and then I began to think it over, and cuss myself harder than ever for a natural born fool that didn't have enough sand to throw up the game at first, and go home and face the music. It was too late then, and I couldn't go back to Striped Rock and take all the glory that was coming to me and face Susie, knowing that I was a fake. Besides, I knew the boys from Range City were liable to go up to Striped Rock and tell the whole story any time, and it froze me inside. I didn't know what to do, but the first thing that I had on hand was to catch them at the dock, and tell them all that it meant to me, and get them to promise that they wouldn't tell. Whether I'd dare to go back and try to get Susie I couldn't even think.

I threw up my job with the Doctor, and went down to the transport office to see just when they expected the boys. Little house on the dock; little hole rooms that you could scarcely turn round in. They said that the boss transport man was in the next room. I walked in.

There, face to face, was Susie—Susie, pinkey and whitey, her eyes just growing and growing. I couldn't turn, I couldn't run; I could just hang tight on to the door-knob and study the floor. The

transport man went out and left us alone. And she said :

'Admeh Drake, *what* are you ?'

My inwards, me saying nothing all the time, said that I was a fool and a thief and a liar. I could have lied, told her that I came home ahead of the regiment, if it had been anyone but Susie ; but I told her the truth, bellowed it out, because my soul was burned paper.

'I came out to see you come back,' she said ; and then, 'I thought that I could be proud of you.' Never another word she said, and she never looked at me again ; but she threw out her hand all of a sudden, and something dropped. It was the play kid ring I gave her the night that I wish I had died.

I tried to talk ; I tried to hold the door ; I might as well have tried to talk to the wall. The last I saw of her—the last that ever I will see—was her molassesy gold hair in the sunshine going out of the big gate.

I spilled out over the transport man, and—— O God! how I cried! I ain't ashamed of it. You'd have cried too. After that, I don't know what I did. I walked over a bigger patch of hell than any man ever did alone. But the regiment's come and gone, and never found me, and I don't know why I ain't dead along with my insides.

And they mustered out at Denver, and the boys split up and went home. Company N went back to Range City—cottonwoods shedding along the creeks, ranges all white on top, sagey smell off the foothills, people riding and driving in from the ranches by hundreds to see them and cheer them, and feed them and hug them ; but there wasn't any hero for Striped Rock, because he had bad eyes and was a dam fool—a dam fool.

CHAPTER V

THE DIMES OF COFFEE JOHN

'WELL,' said the Harvard Freshman, after the last tale was told, 'I'm dead broke, and my brain seems to have gone out of business!'

'I'm broke, and my heart's broke, too,' said the hero of Pago Bridge.

'I'm broke similar,' said the ex-medium, 'and my nerves is a-sufferin' from a severe disruption.'

Coffee John thumped his red fist upon the table.

'Bryce up, gents!' he exclaimed. 'Remember there's nothink in the ryce but the finish, as the dark 'orse says w'en 'e led 'em up to the wire. They's many a man 'as went broke in this 'ere tarn, an' 'as lived to build a four-story 'ouse in the Western Addition; an' they's plenty more as will go broke afore the trams stop runnin' on Market Street! This 'ere is a city o' hextremes, you tyke me word for that! It ain't on'y that Chinatarn is a stone's-throw from the haristocracy o' Nob Hill,

an' they's a corner grocery with a side entrance alongside of every Methody chapel. It ain't on'y that the gals 'ere is prettier an' homblier an' stryter an' wickeder than anyw'eres else in Christendom, but things go up an' darn every other wye a man can nyme. It's corffee an' sinkers to-dye, an' champyne an' terrapin to-morrer for 'arf the people what hits the village. They's washwomen's darters wot's wyrin' of their dimonds art on Pacific Avenoo, an' they's lawst year's millionaires wot's livin' in two rooms darn on Minnie Street. It's the wye o' life in a new country, gents, but they's plums a-gettin' ripe yet, just the syme, every bleedin' dye, I give yer *my* word! Good Gawd! look at me, myself! Lemme tell yer wot's happened to me in my time.'

And with this philosophic introduction Coffee John began

The Story of Big Becky.

When I fust struck this 'ere port, I was an yble seaman on the British bark *Four Winds*, art o' Iquique, with nitrytes, an' I was abart as green a lad as ever was plucked. W'en I drored the nine dollars that was a-comin' to me, I went ashore an' took a look at the tarn, an' I decided right then

that this was the plyce for me. So I calmly deserts the bark, an' I ain't set me foot to a bloomin' gangplank from that dye to this, syvin' to tyke the ferry to Oakland.

Me money larsted abart four dyes. The bleedin' sharks at the sylor boardin'-'ouse charged five, a femile in a box at the 'Golden West' darnce-hall got awye with three more, an' the rest was throwed into drinks promiscus. The fourth dye in I 'adn't a bloomin' penny to me nyme, an' I was as wretched as a 'orse in a snowstorm. After abart twelve hours in 'Ell's 'Alf-acre, I drifted into a dive, darn on Pacific Street below Kearney, on the Barbary Coast as *was* the Barbary Coast in them dyes! It was a well-known plyce then, an' not like anythink else wot ever done business that I ever seen. 'Bottle Myer's' it was; perhaps yer may have heard of it? No?

Yer went in through a swing-door with a brarss sign on, darn a 'allwye as turned into a corner into a wider plyce w'ere the bar was, an' beyond that to a 'all that might 'ave 'eld, I should sye, some sixty men or thereabart. The walls was pynted in a blue distemper, but for a matter of a foot or so above the floor there was wot yer might call a dydo o' terbacker juice, like a bloomin' coat o' brarn pynte. The 'all smelled full strong o' fresh spruce sawdust

on the floor, an' the rest was whiffs o' kerosene ile an' sylor's shag terbacker an' style beer, an' the combination was jolly narsty! Every man 'ad 'is mug o' beer on a shelf in front o' 'is bench, an' the poundink of 'em after a song was somethink awful. On a bit of a styge was a row of performers in farncy dress like a nigger minstrel show, an' a beery little bloke sat darn in front, bangin' a tin-pan pianner, reachin' for 'is drink with one 'and occysional, withart leavin' off plyin' with the other.

Well, after a guy 'ad sung 'All through a lydy wot was false an' fyre,' an' one o' the hens 'ad cracked art 'Darn the Lyne to Myry,' or somethink like that, old Bottle Myer, 'e got up, with a 'ed like a cannon-ball, an' cock-eyes an' eyebrars like bits o' thatch, an' a farncy flannel shirt, an' 'e says:

'If any gent present wants to sing a song he can, an' if 'e don't want to, 'e don't 'ave to!'

Nar, I wan't no singer myself, though I had piped occysional to me mytes on shipboard, but I thought if I couldn't do as well as them as 'ad myde us suffer, I ought to be jolly well ashymed o' myself. Wot was more to the point, I didn't 'ave the price of a pot o' beer to bless myself with, an', thinks I, this might be a charnst to pinch a bit of a 'aul. So I ups an' walks darn to the styge, gives the bloke at

the pianner a tip on the chune, an' starts off on old 'Ben Bobstye.' They was shell-backs in the audience quite numerous, as I seen, an' it done me good to 'ear 'em parnd their mugs after I'd gort through. W'en I picked up the abalony shell like the rest of 'em done, an' parssed through the 'all, wot with dimes an' two-bit pieces, I 'ad considerable, an' I was natchurly prard o' me luck.

Old Bottle Myer come up an' says, ''Ow much did yer myke, me friend ? Five fifteen, eh ? Well, me charge will be on'y a dollar this time, but if yer want to come rarnd to-morrow night, yer can. If yer do all right, I'll tyke yer on reg'lar.'

Well, I joined the comp'ny sure enough, an' sung every night, pickin' up a feerly decent livin' at the gyme, for it was boom times then, an' money was easier to come by. I had me grub with all the other hartists in a room they called the 'Cabin,' darn below the styge, connected to a side dressin'-room by a narrer styre. Nar, one o' the lydies in the comp'ny was the feature o' the show, an' she *were* a bit out o' the ord'n'ry, I give you *my* word !

She was a reg'lar whyle of a great big trouncin' Jew woman as ever I see. Twenty stone if she were an arnce, an' all o' six foot two, with laigs like a bloomin' grand pianner w'en she put on a short petticoat to do a comic song. She was billed as

'Big Becky,' and by thet time she was pretty well known abart tarn.

She 'ad started in business in San Francisco at the hextreme top o' the 'Ebrew aristocracy o' the Western Addition, 'avin' parssed 'erself off for a member o' one o' the swellest families o' St. Louis, an' she *did* cut a jolly wide swath here, an' no dart abart *that!* She was myde puffickly at 'ome every-w'eres, an' flashed 'er sparklers an' 'er silk garns with the best of 'em. Lord, it must have took yards o' cloth to cover '*er* body! Well, she gort all the nobs into line, an' 'ad everythink 'er own wye for abart two months as a reg'lar full-blowed society favoryte. Day an' night she 'ad a string o' men after her, or 'er money, w'ich was quite two things, seein' she 'ad to graft for every penny she bloomin' well 'ad!

W'ile she were at the top notch of the social w'irl, as you might sye, along come another Jewess from the East, reckernised 'er, an' spoils Big Becky's gyme, like a kiddie pricks a 'ole in a pink balloon. She was showed up for a hadventuress, story-book style, wot 'ad 'oodwinked all St. Louis a year back, an' then 'er swell pals dropped awye from 'er like she was a pest-'ouse. Them wot 'ad accepted 'er invites, an' 'ad 'er to dinner an' the theatre an' wot-not, didn't myke no bones abart it—they just

natchurly broke an' run. Then all sorts o' stories come art, 'ow she had borrowed money 'ere, there, an' everyw'ere, put 'er nyme to bad checks, an' fleeced abart every bloomin' Israelite in tarn. She'd been playin' it on the grand, and on the little bit too grand.

She was on trial for abart six dyes, an' the city pypers was so full o' the scandal that 'arf the Chosen People 'ad to leave tarn till it blew over, an' San Francisco quit larfin' at 'em. I give yer me word, the reporters *did* give art some precious rycy tales, an' every 'Ebrew wot 'ad 'ad Big Becky at a five-o'clock tea didn't dyre go art o' doors dye-times.

Well, for the syke o' 'ushin' matters up, her cyse were compromised, an' the prosecution withdrawed, she bein' arsked in return to git art o' tarn. Instead o' that, not 'avin' any money, she went an' accepted an offer from a dime-museum here, an' begun for to exhibit of 'erself in short skirts every afternoon an' evenink reg'lar, to the gryte an' grand delight of every chappie who 'adn't been fooled themselves. After that, she done 'Mazeppa' at the 'Bella Union' Theatre in a costume wot was positively 'orrid. It was so rude that the police interfered, an' that was back ten year ago, w'en they wan't so partickler on the Barbary Coast as they be naradyes.

Then she dropped darn to Bottle Myer's, an' did serios in tights. She was as funny as a bloomin' helephant on stilts, if so yer didn't see the plyntive side of it, an' we turned men awye from the door every night.

I don't expect Becky ever 'ad more'n a spoonful o' conscience. But with all 'er roguery, she was as big a byby inside as she were a giant outside, w'en yer onct knew 'ow to tyke her, was Big Becky. 'Ard as brarss she was w'en yer guyed 'er, but soft as butter w'en yer took 'er part, w'ich were somethink as she weren't much used to, for most treated 'er brutal. Some'ow I couldn't help likin' 'er a bit, in spite o' myself. I put in a good deal o' talk with 'er one wye an' another, till I 'ad 'er confidence; an' could get most anythink art of 'er I wanted. She told me 'er whole story, bit by bit, an' it were a reg'lar shillin' shocker, I give yer *my* word!

Amongst other things, she told me that a Johnnie in tarn nymed Ikey Behn 'ad gort precious balmy over 'er before she was showed up, an' 'ad went so far as to tyke art a marriage license in 'opes, when she seen 'e meant biz, she'd 'ave 'im. 'E'd even been bloomin' ass enough to give it to 'er, and she 'ad it yet, an' was 'oldin' it over 'is 'ed for blackmyle, if worst come to worst. She proposed for to 'ave a parson's nyme forged into the marriage certificate

that comes printed on the other side from the license.

Nar, things bein' like this, one night I come up the styre from the 'Cabin,' w'ere I'd been lyte to dinner, an' went into the room w'ere Becky was a-gettin' ready to dress for 'er turn. There was a toff there in a topper an' a long black coat, an' 'e was havin' it art, 'ot an' 'eavy, with Becky. Just as I come up, 'e broke it off, cursink 'er somethink awful, an' she was as red as a bleedin' 'am, an' shykin' like a hearthquyke, with 'er 'air darn an' 'er breath comin' like a smith's bellus. The gentleman slum the door, an' she says to me, 'Ere, Jock, old man, will yer do me a fyvor? Just 'old this purse o' mine, an' keep it good an' syfe till I get through my song, for that's Ikey Behn wot just went art, an' 'e'll get my license sure if I leave it abart. I carn't trust nobody in this 'ole but you. It's in there,' an' she showed me the pyper, shovin' the purse into me 'and. I left an' went darn front w'ile she put on 'er rig an' done 'er turn.

Art in the bar there was the toff talkin' to one o' the wyters, an' I knew 'e was tryin' to tip somebody to frisk Big Becky's pockets. W'en I come up 'e says, ''Ow de do, me man? I sye, 'ave a glarss with me, won't yer? Wot'll ye 'ave?'

I marked 'is gyme then an' there, an' I sat darn

to see 'ow 'e'd act. 'E done it 'andsome, 'e did; 'e *was* a thoroughbred, an' no mistyke abart *that!* 'E wan't the bloke to drive a bargain like most would 'ave done under the syme irritytin' circumstances.

'See 'ere,' 'e says affable, an' 'e opens 'is wallet an' tykes art a pack o' bills, 'there's a tharsand in hunderd-dollar greenbacks. You get me that pyper Big Becky's gort in 'er purse!'

There I was, sittin' right in front of 'im, with the license in me pocket, an' there was a fortune in front o' me as would 'ave set me up in biz for the rest o' me life. Wot's more, if they's anythink I do admire it's a thoroughbred toff, for I was brought up to reckernize clarss, an' I seen at a wink that this 'ere Johnnie was a dead sport. I knew wot it meant to 'im to get possession o' that pyper, for Becky could myke it jolly 'ot for 'im with it. I confess, gents, that for abart 'alf a mo I hesityted. But I couldn't go back on the woman, seein' she 'ad trusted me partickler, an' so I shook me 'ead mournful an' refused the wad.

'E was a bit darn in the mouth at that, not lookin' to run up agin such in a plyce like Bottle Myer's, I expeck.

'See 'ere, me man,' 'e says, 'I just *gort* to 'ave thet pyper. I'll tell yer wot, w'en I gort art that

license, I swyre I thought the woman was stryte an' all she pretended to be. We was all of us took in. I wan't after 'er money; I was plum balmy on 'er, sure. An 'nar I'm engyged to the nicest little gal as ever lived, an' it'll queer the whole thing if this 'ere foolishness gets art!'

With my respeck for the aristocracy, I was jolly sorry for the chap, but I wan't a-goin' to sell Becky art, not *that* wye. I wan't no Holy Willie, but I stuck at that. So I arsked:

'Wot's the gal's nyme?'

'That's none o' your biz,' says Behn, gettin' 'ot in the scuppers, 'an' that little gyme won't do yer no good nohow, for the gal knows all abart this matter, an' yer can't trip me up there. Not much. I'll pye yer all the docyment's worth if yer'll get it for me.'

'You won't get it art o' Becky not at no price,' I says, ''an yer won't get it art o' me unless yer answer my questing. If yer wan't me to conduck this 'ere affyre I got to know all abart it, an' yer gal won't be put to no bother neither.'

'E looked me over a bit, an' then 'e says, low, so that nobody couldn't 'ear, 'It's Miss Bertha Wolfstein.' Then 'e give me 'is address, an' left the matter for me to do wot I could.

I thought if anybody could work Becky it would

be me, an' I expected the gal' snyme might come in 'andy, though I 'ad no idea then how strong it would pull. So I goes up to the big woman, after she was dressed, and tykes 'er up to the Poodle Dog Restaurant for supper. She 'ad gort over the worry by this time, an' was feelink as chipper as a brig in a west wind.

'Did ever you 'ear tell of a Bertha Wolfstein?' I says offhand.

Then wot does she do but begins to bryke darn an' blubber.

'She was the on'y one in tarn as come to see me after I was pulled,' she says. 'I done all kinds o' fyvors for lots of 'em, but Miss Wolfstein was the on'y one who 'ad called me friend as ever remembered it. She was a lydy, was Miss Wolfstein; she treated me angel w'ite, she did, Gawd bless 'er pretty fyce!'

Then I knowed I 'ad 'er w'ere I wanted 'er, an' I give it to 'er tender an' soft, with all the sugar an' cream she could stand. I let art Ikey Behn's story inch by inch, an' I pynted the feelinks o' thet Bertha Wolfstein with all the tack I knew how till I gort Becky on the run, an' she boohooed again, right art loud, an' I see I 'ad won 'er over. My word, she *did* look a sight for spectytors after she'd wiped a 'arf parnd o' pynte off'n 'er fyce with 'er napkin, sobbink awye like 'er 'eart was as soft as a slug in a

mud-puddle. She parssed over the pyper art of 'er purse, an' she says, 'Yer can give it to Ikey an' get the money. I don't want to hurt a 'air o' thet gal's 'ead.'

Seein' she was so easy worked, I thought it was on'y right I should be pyde for me trouble, for it 'ad stood me somethink for a private room an' drinks an' such to get her into proper condition.

So I says, 'That's all right, Becky, an' it's jolly 'andsome o' yer to be willin' to let go o' the docky-ment, but I'll be blowed if I see 'ow yer can tyke 'is money w'en yer feel that wye. If yer sell art the pyper, w'ere does the bloomin' gratitude to the gal come in, anywye ?'

At this Becky looked all wyes for a Sunday, an' I perceeded to rub it in.

'Nar, see here, Becky, w'ich would yer rather do —get five 'undred dollars for the license from Ikey, or let Miss Wolfstein know yer'd made a present of it to 'er for wot she done to yer ?'

That was a 'ard conundrum for a woman like thet, who 'ad fleeced abart every pal she ever 'ad, an' the money was a snug bit for anybody who was as 'ard up as she was then. I thought I'd mark the price darn a bit so's to myke the sacrifice easier for 'er. I didn't dyre to trust her with a offer of the tharsand Ikey 'ad flashed at me. Besides, I thought I see a

charnst to myke a bit myself withart lyin'. Sure enough, I 'ad read the weather in 'er fyce all right, an' she was gyme to lose five 'undred just to sye 'thank you,' as yer might sye. I farncy I'd found abart the only spot in 'er 'eart as wan't rotten.

'I guess I'd rather 'ave 'er know I ain't quite so bad as they think,' she says, an' she gulluped an' rubbed 'er eyes. 'You go to Ikey, an' you tell 'im 'e's a——' well, I won't sye wot she called 'im—'but Bertha Wolfstein is the on'y lydy in tarn, an' it's on'y for 'er syke I'm givin' up the license.'

Then she kerflummuxed again, an' if yer think I left her time to think it over, yer don't know old John. I took the pyper before the words was feerly art of 'er marth, an' in 'alf an 'our I was pullin' Ikey Behn's door-bell. When 'e seen me, 'e grinned like a cat in a cream-jug, an' 'e arsked me into the li'bry like I was a rich uncle just 'ome from the dimond fields.

Nar, yer might think as I was a-goin' to try to sell 'im the pyper on me own account, leavin' 'im to think that Becky was gettin' the price of it an' me a percentage. Not much I wan't, not on yer blessed life! I was too clever for that! I've seen reel toffs before, an' I knew Ikey for best clarss when I piped 'im off. 'Ave yer ever watched the boot-blacks in Piccadilly Circis? D'yer think they has

a trades-union price for a shine? Nar! W'en a bleedin' swell comes along and gits a polish an' arsks 'ow much, it's 'Wot yer please, sir,' an' 'I leaves it to you, sir,' an' the blackie gits abart four times wot 'e'd a-dared to arsk, specially if the toff's a bit squeegee. Thet's the on'y wye to treat a gentleman born, an' I knew it! So I tipped 'im off the stryte story, leavin' nothing art to speak of, an' 'e listens affable. I 'ands 'im over the license at the end.

W'en 'e'd stuck the pyper in a candle 'andy, an' 'ad lighted a big cigar with it, offerink the syme an' a drink to me, 'e says, as cool as a pig before Christmas, says 'e, 'Nar, me man, wot d'yer want for your trouble? You done me a fyvor, an' no dart abart *that!*'

'No trouble at all,' I says; 'I'm proud to oblige such a perfeck gentleman as you be;' an' with that I picks up me 'at an' walks towards the door.

'Wyte a bit,' 'e says; 'I'll see if I ain't gort a dollar on me,' an' 'e smiles cordial. But 'e watches me fyce sharp, too, as I seen in the lookin'-glarss. Then 'e goes to a writin'-desk, an' looks in a dror. 'If happen yer don't want any o' this yerself, yer can give it to Becky,' 'e says; an' 'e seals up a packet an' gives it to me like 'e was the bloomin'

Prince o' Wyles. Gawd, 'e *was* a toff, clean darn to 'is boot-pegs, I give yer *my* word !

W'en I gort out o' doors an' opened the packet I near faynted awye. They was a wad o' hundreds as come to a cool four tharsand dollars. I walked back on the bloomin' hatmosphere !

I come into Bottle Myer's just as Big Becky was a-singin' ' Sweet Vylets,' in a long w'ite baby rig an' a bunnit as big as a 'ogshead. Lord, old Myers *did* myke a guy o' that woman somethink awful ! W'en she come off, I was wytin' in the dressin'-room for her.

' My Gawd, Jock !' she says, w'en she seen me, ' yer didn't give up the pyper, did you ? Yer knew I was on'y foolin', didn't yer ? Don't sye yer let Ikey get a-hold of it ! It was good for a 'underd to me any dye I needed the money if I wanted to give it to the pypers.'

Well, thet myde me sick, though I'd expecked as much. I was thet disgusted that she couldn't stand by 'er word for a hour that I couldn't 'elp syin', ' An' 'ow abart Miss Wolfstein, as was a friend to yer w'en all the other women in tarn went back on yer, Becky ? Yer know wot *she'll* think of yer, don't yer ?'

Right then I seen abart as plucky a fight between good an' bad worked art on 'er fyce as I ever seen

in the ring, London prize rules to a finish. An' if you'll believe it, gents, the big woman's gratitude to the Wolfstein gal come art on top, an' the stingy part of 'er was knocked art flat.

It were a tough battle, though, I give yer *my* word, before I got the decision. She bit 'er lip till the blood come through the rouge, standin' there, a great whoopin' big mounting o' flesh with baby clothes an' a pink sash on, an' a wig an' bunnit like a bloomin' Drury Lyne Christmas Pantymime. I just stood an' looked at 'er. I'm blowed if she didn't git almost pretty for 'alf a mo w'en she says :

' I'm glad you did give it up, Jock ; I'm glad nar it's all over. But that five 'underd would have syved me life, for old Myers 'as give me the sack to-dye, an' I don't know wot'll become o' me. I've done in everythink I gort.'

Wot did I do ? I done wot the dirtiest sneak in the Pen. would a-did, an' 'anded art the envelope an' split the pile with 'er.

Coffee John fetched a deep sigh. ' Well, gents, thet's w'ere I got me start. The wad didn't larst long, for I was green an' unused to money ; but I syved art enough to set me up 'ere, an' 'ere I am yet. I never seen Big Becky sinct.

' Nar yer see wot a man might 'appen to strike

in a tarn like this. Every bloomin' dye they's somebody up an' somebody darn. I started withart a penny, an' I pulled art a small but helegant fortune in a week's time. So kin any man.

'Gents, I give you this stryte: life in San Francisco is a bloomin' fayry tyle if a man knows 'is wye abart, an' a bloke can bloomin' well blyme 'is own liver if 'e carnt find a bit of everythink 'ere 'e wants, from the Californy gal, w'ich is the noblest work o' Gawd, to the 'Frisco flea, w'ich is a bleedin' cousin to the Old Nick 'isself! They ain't no tarn like it, they ain't never been none, an' they ain't never goin' to be. It ain't got neither turf nor trees nor kebs, but it's bloody well gort a climate as mykes a man's 'eart darnce in 'is bussum, an' cable-cars wot'll tyke a guy uphill to 'eaven, or rarnd the bloomin' next corner to 'ell's cellar! They's every sin 'ere except 'ypocrisy, for that ain't needed, an' they's people wot would 'ave been synted if they'd lived in ancient times.

'An' nar I want to eggspress somethink o' wot I thinks o' you bums. As fur as I can see everyone o' yer is a 'awd cyse, 'avin' indulged in wot yer might call questingable practices, withart yet bein', so to speak, of the criminal clarss. It don't go to myke a man partickerly prard o' 'umanity to keep a dime restaurant; 'arrivver, 'evving know swot I'd

do if I couldn't sometimes indulge in the bloomin' glow of 'ope. Vango, I allar you'll be a bad un, and I don't expeck to make a Sunday-school superintendent of you. Coffin uses such lengwidge as mykes a man wonder if 'e ain't a bleedin' street fakir on a 'arf 'oliday, so I gives 'im up frankly an' freely, an' simply 'opes for the best. But you, Dryke, is just a pline ornery lad as 'as 'ad 'is 'eart broke, an' you 'as me sympathy as a man with feelinks an' a conscience.

'Nar, I'll tell yer wot I'll do. I'll styke the three of yer a dime apiece, an' yer git art o' 'ere with the firm intentions o' gettin' rich. M'ybe yer won't myke it, an' then again m'ybe yer will; but it's a good gamble, an' I'd like to have it tried art. Anywye, come back 'ere to-morrow at nine, an' 'ave dinner on me, an' tell me all abart it. Wot d'yer sye?'

It was a psychological moment. The proposition, fantastic as it was, seemed, under the spell of Coffee John's enthusiasm, to promise something mysteriously new, something grotesquely romantic. It was a chance to turn a new leaf. The three vagabonds were each stranded at a turn of the tide. The medium, with his nerves unstrung, was only too willing to cast on fate the responsibility of the next move. The Harvard Freshman, with no

nerves at all, one might say, hailed the adventure as a Quixotic quest that would be amusing to put to the hazard of chance. The hero of Pago Bridge had little spirit left, but, like Vango, he welcomed any fortuitous hint that would tell him which way to turn in his misery. All three were well worked upon by the solace of the moment, and a full belly makes every man brave. Coffee John's appeal went home, and from the sordid little shop three beggars went forth as men. One after the other accepted the lucky dime, and fared into the night to pursue the firefly of fortune.

In ten minutes the restaurant was dark and empty, and Coffee John was snoring in a back-room. Three Picaroons were busy at the Romance of Roguery.

CHAPTER VI

THE FORTY PANATELLAS

James Wiswell Coffin, Third, was the first of the three adventurers to leave the restaurant, and as he turned up Kearney Street he had a new but fully-fledged philosophy buzzing in his brain. Enlightenment had come in a hint dropped by Coffee John himself. It took a Harvard man and a Bostonian of Puritan stock to hatch that chick of thought, but by the time the coffee was finished the mental egg broke, and an idea burst upon him. It was this :

'Facts show that good luck is stable for awhile, and is then followed by a run of misfortune. The mathematical ideal of alternate favourable and unfavourable combinations does not often occur. There is where the great law of probabilities falls down hard. The curve of fortune is like a wave ; it should then be played heavily while it ascends, and lightly on the decline. Mine is undoubtedly rising. Go to ! I shall proceed to gamble !'

But how gamble at midnight with a capital of but one dime? In no other city in the world is it so easy as in San Francisco, that quaint rendezvous of saloons and cigar-stands. There the goddess Fortuna has a shrine on every street-corner, and the offerings of her devotees produce a rattle as characteristic of the town as the slap of the cable-pulley in the conduit of the car-lines. The cigar slot-machine or 'hard-luck box' is a nickel lottery played by good and bad alike; for it has a reputation no shadier than the church-raffle or the juvenile grab-bag, and is tolerated as a harmless safety-valve for the lust of gambling. All the same, it is the perpetual, ubiquitous delusion of the amateur sportsman.

Gunschke's cigar-shop was still open as Coffin reached the corner of Bush Street. He walked briskly inside the open salesroom (for a cigar-shop has but three walls in San Francisco's gentle clime), and, with the assurance of one who has just touched a humpback and the carelessness of a millionaire, he exchanged Coffee John's dime for two nickels, dropped one down the slot of the machine on the counter, and sprang the handle. The five wheels of playing-cards whirled madly, then stopped, leaving a poker-hand exposed behind the wire. He had caught a pair of kings, good for a 'bit' cigar.

Coffin was disappointed; and yet, after all, there

was a slight gain in the transaction. Investing five cents, he had won twelve and a half cents' worth of merchandise. It was not sufficiently marvellous to turn his head, but his luck was evidently on the up-curve, though it was rising slowly enough. He took the other nickel—his last—and jerked the handle again, awaiting with calmness for the cards to come to a standstill.

As the wheels settled into place, a man with green eyes and be-diamonded shirt came up and leaned over Coffin's shoulder.

'Good work! A straight flush, by Crickety! Forty cigars! Get in and break the bank, young fellow!'

Coffin turned to him with nonchalance, while the clerk marked the winning in a book.

'Nn—nn! I know when I've got enough.'

'Play for me, then, will you?' the other rejoined. 'You've got luck, you have.'

'I don't propose to make a present of it to you if I have; I need every stitch of it myself.' And then Coffin, touched with a happy thought, began to swagger. 'Besides, if I'm going to smoke this forty up to-night, I've got to get busy with myself.' He looked knowingly at the goods displayed for his choice, pinching the wrappers. 'I've never had all the cigars I could smoke yet, and I'm going to try

my limit. Got any Africana Panatellas, Colorado Maduro ?' he asked the clerk.

A small box was taken down from the shelf. Coffin accepted it, and walked leisurely towards the door.

'Good Lord !' cried the stranger, following him, 'you don't think you can tackle forty cigars on a stretch, do you ? Kid, it'll kill you !'

'It's a beautiful death,' Coffin replied jauntily ; 'you can tell mamma I died happy.'

The cigar-clerk grinned.

'Strikes me you're troubled with youngness,' said the stranger, looking him over.

Coffin ruffled at his patronizing tone. 'See here ! D'you think I can't get away with these forty cigars, smoking 'em in an end-to-end chain down to one-inch butts ?'

'I bet you a hundred dollars you get sick as a pig first !' was the reply.

'Taken !' Coffin cried, and went at him with fire in his eye. 'See here ! I left all my money on my grand piano, but if you'll trust me, I'll trust you, without stakes held. We'll get the clerk here to see fair play, and if I don't see this box to a finish or pay up, you two can push the face off me. What d'you say ?'

The green-eyed stranger, who had evidently

money to spend foolishly and a night to waste in doing it, assented jovially. It is not hard to organize an impromptu trio for any hair-brained purpose whatever in that land of careless comradeship. The two waited till the clerk had put up the screen at the front of the shop, and then walked with him round to California Street. Half-way up the first block stood an old-fashioned wooden house, painted drab, with green blinds, in striking contrast to the high brick buildings that surrounded it. The frame had been brought round Cape Horn in '49, and in pioneer days the place had been one of the most fashionable boarding-houses in town. Chinatown now crowded it in ; it had fallen into disrepute, and was visited only by the poorer class of foreigners. Over the entrance was a sign bearing the inscription ' Hotel de France.' Here the salesman had a room.

The lower part of the house was dark, but in answer to a prolonged ringing on the bell a small boy appeared, and, with many comments in a patois of the Bas Pyrénées, lighted two lamps in the bar-room. The three men sat down, and took off their coats and collars for comfort. James Wiswell Coffin, third, opened the box of Panatellas, and regarded them with a sentimental eye.

' I see *my* finish,' he muttered ; ' it's good-bye to the grateful weed for me after to-night. If I come

out of this alive, and ever want to smoke again, it will guarantee my constitution. I've tried for years to break off this expensive habit, but I guess this homœopathic treatment will throw the curse off the track, if my stomjack will stand in and not give me the double cross. Anyway, I'm durn glad they're not bananas.'

He bit the end of the first cigar, and struck a match. Then he bowed to the company with the theatrical air of a man about to touch off a loaded bomb. ' Gentlemen, I proceed to take my degree of Bachelor of Nicotine, if I don't funk.' He lighted the tobacco, quoting 'Ave, Cæsar! moraturi te salutant !' and blew forth a ring of smoke. It floated upward, smooth and even, hovered over his head a moment like a halo, then, writhing, scattered and drifted away. Coffin removed the cigar from his mouth, and looked thoughtfully at the ash.

' It burns all right,' he said ; ' I won't have to put kerosene on 'em to make 'em go. D'you know, a Panatella always reminds me of a smart, tailor-made girl. It's the most slenderly beautiful shape for a cigar ; it's gracile, by Jove !—gracile and jimpriculate ; I got that word in Kentucky. Such a tender brunette in her chocolate wrapper and filmy tresses of smoke. No wonder I kiss her and caress her—like this.' And he put the cigar again to his

lips. The two other men, unused to such rhapsodies, listened in amusement. Coffin was in a mood for monologue; he had dined, and the good-humour of the feast was still with him.

'This is a frothy little town,' he went on; 'Kearney Street is about the primrosiest path of dalliance that ever went anywhere. I give that out official, in large red letters. All bluffs are called on that lane, and methinks it is largely up to Yours Affectionately to make good or remove to the dark side of the moon. But my luck is still on the up-curve, and I propose to play nothing but blue chips. With the help of an occasional bite of Spring Valley water and a few tame soda-crackers, I hope to see the breaking of another dawn.

'Yesterday this day's madness did prepare, but I am sorry, pained, and shocked to say that yesterday thoughtlessly failed to include me in the Committee of Arrangements, or I might have been considerably more otherwise. To-morrow's Silence, Triumph, or Despair, which I consider, gentlemen, durned ambiguous; still, I hope yet to side-step Silence. But I chatter, friends; I am as garrulous as a plate-glass show-window dummy in a $9.85 suit, and but a matchboxful of brains south of her pompadour. I think I have now said all I know, and it's your edge, stranger. How would it do for you to enliven the

pink and frisky watches of the night by narrating a few of the more inflammable chapters of your autobiography ? I may gab when I'm screwed up a bit, but I'm a thirty-third degree listener when there's anything improper to hear.'

Thus conjured by the imp, the stranger consented to relate, after a few preliminaries, the following tale :

The Story of the Returned Klondyker.

This is pretty near the finish, young fellow, of the biggest spending jag this town ever saw. The money cost me sixteen years of tramping and trading and frozen toes, and then it came slap, all in a bunch. So it's easy come, easy go, says I.

I was breaking North, the year of the big find, when I struck hard luck. That's too long a yarn to tell. But the end was that I landed two hundred miles from nowhere, cracked in the head from behind, and left for dead in the snow. The Malemute that did it had his finish in Dawson that winter by the rope route, spoiling the shot I was saving for him.

I was stooping over, fixing a sled-runner, when—biff !—— I woke up in an Indian hut filled with smoke. The whole works were buzzing round, and

a lot of big, husky bucks and squaws grunting over me. I was for getting up and cleaning them out, but I hadn't the strength. For a month I was plum-nutty ; but every little while, when my head cleared, I'd look up to see a good-natured-looking brown girl with black eyes taking care of me as carefully as if she was a trained nurse. She wasn't what you'd call pretty in the temperate zone, but I hadn't seen a white woman for years, and I was used to Arctic notions of good looks. She was short and plump, with a chubby round face and thick lips, with teeth as regular and white as the snow, and nice little hands like a lady's.

As I got over the fever slowly, I made out, she telling me in Chinook, that she had found me half frozen to death, and had carried me fifty miles by sled. How she did it the Lord only knows ; maybe it was because she was gone on me, which I oughtn't to say, neither ; but she sure was. I did a heap of thinking. She had grit and gentleness, and the feelings of a lady, which is what every woman that calls herself such hasn't got ; and the more I saw of her the better I liked her. So when I got well I had a pow-wow with her father, who was chief of the tribe, and I bought her for ten dogs on tick and my gun, which the durned thief had forgot in the mix-up, and sixty tin tags I'd been saving from plugs of

tobacco to get a free meerschaum pipe with. We were married Indian fashion, which is pretty easy, and she came and lived with me in my hut.

Since then I've had plenty of the stuff that's supposed to make a man happy, but I'm blowed if I was ever happier than I was that winter, living with the tribe and married to Kate. That was the name I gave her ; it was easier to say than her own, which I couldn't pronounce if I tried, much less spell. I told her that in my country her proper name would be Mrs. Saul Timney, and it tickled her to death. Any time I wanted to please her or coax her into doing anything, I called her that, and she was as proud as Punch.

Well, that winter was over at last. It came spring, or what you might call such, with the ice beginning to melt and the sun getting up for a little while every day, lighter and lighter. One day Kate and I went fishing. She pulled in her line, and I saw something that made me forget I was an Indian, adopted into the tribe, all regular. Her sinker was a gold nugget as big as the fist on a papoose !

I knew it the minute I laid my eyes on it, though it was all black with water and weather. I grabbed it, and cut it with my jack-knife. It was as soft as lead, reddish yellow.

' Where ever did you get that ?' I said in Chinook.

'Up by the Katakoolanat Pass,' she said, unconcerned-like, as if it was pig-iron; 'I picked it up because it was heavy.'

'Can you find the place again?' I asked her.

She studied awhile. But the Indians never forget anything; it's book-learning that makes you forget. I knew she'd remember before she got through, and she did. She took her fish-line, and laid it out in funny curves and loops on the top of the snow, like a map, knotting it here and there to show places she knew—mountain-peaks, lakes, and suchlike. Then she pointed out the way with her finger. She had it down fine. When she got done, she looked up to me with a grin, and said: 'Why?'

Then it came to me all of a sudden that she had no idea of the worth of her find. This was before the big rush, and her tribe didn't see white men more than twice a year; their regular hunting-grounds were far to the north. They traded skins and dogs and fish once in a while with traders, and got beads and truck in return. With the other Indians they made change by strings of wampum they call alliga-cheeks. She had no idea of the value of gold, and she'd never seen a piece of money in her life. But I didn't stop to explain then.

'Come on,' I said; 'we're going to borrow dogs, and sled north to the Katakoolanat country, for sure!'

She never said a word, but packed up and followed, the way she was trained to do. But all the way she watched me as if I was crazy.

We found the place the third day, just like she said we should. Lord! that was a bonanza all right! You could dig out nuggets with a stick. It was the Katakoolanat diggings you may have heard about. I was the Father of the Katakoolanat; that's what they called me when I had my picture in the *Herald* three weeks ago. You can read the whole story in the paper if you want to.

When I had staked out my claims, two prospectors got wind of it, and started the rush. I got our band to move up and help me hold my rights, and when some Seattle agents offered me four hundred thousand dollars for my claims, I took it, you bet.

The first thing I did after that was to pay back a hundred dogs for the ten I had promised for Kate; then I bought up all the provisions I could get hold of—eggs a dollar apiece, bacon five dollars a pound—and I fed our band of Indians till they couldn't hold any more. It was Kate brought me the luck, and I felt the winnings were more hers than mine. There wasn't anything too good for her. When a Scandihoovian missionary came up to the place, we went and got married white fashion, for I wanted my wife to be respected; and after that I always insisted

that everybody should call her Mrs. Saul Timney, which made her feel about six foot high every time she heard it.

Well, sir, Kate was a study in those times. She couldn't quite get it through her head for a good while why we could put it over the rest of 'em the way we did. The more I got for her, the more puzzled she was. I recall the first time she ever saw money passed ; it was when I bought the dogs. I was paying twenty-dollar gold pieces out of a sack, and she asked me what they were. She thought they were stones, because they looked more than anything else like the flat, round pebbles she had seen on the beach—the kind you throw to skip on the water.

'They're just like alligacheek,' I said ; then, partly for the joke on her, I said : 'Good medicine (meaning magic) ; you can get anything you want with 'em !'

'Give me some,' said Kate, not quite believing me ; for it was a pretty big story to swallow, according to her ideas, though generally what I said went, me being her husband and naturally looked up to. I handed her over a stack of twenties.

She took them, and went out to try the magic. Going up to the first man she met, she held out the whole lot to him, asking him for his slicker. When

I came up and said it was all right, he peeled it right off and handed it over to her, grabbing the money quick. That was a new one on her, and she couldn't quite believe it even then. Well, it was funny to see the way she acted. She bought up pretty near everything in camp she took a fancy to, just for the fun of seeing the magic work, and she was as excited as a kid with a brand-new watch. She called the coins 'medicine-stones,' and it was one long fairy tale to her, spending right and left, seeing the charm work. It did me good to see her so happy. Didn't I know it was really all her money ?

We came out of the country finally, and took a steamer for San Francisco ; for I wanted to see the old town again, and show Kate what big cities were like, besides giving her the chance to spend all the money she wanted on togs and jewellery. We drove up from the wharf in the best turn-out I could find, and put up at the Palace Hotel in the bridal suite. The best was none too good for Kate and me while I was flush.

I rather guess we broke the record for spending the two weeks we stayed there. I had three or four cases of champagne open in my room all the time, and the bell-boys got so they knew they didn't have to be asked, but would just pop the cork and let her fizz. I got a great big music-box that cost more

than a piano, with drums and bells inside, and we kept it a-going while we were eating, which was most of the time we weren't out doing the town. I blowed myself for an outfit of sparklers, of which this stone here in my shirt-front is the last sole survivor. I bought more clothes than I could wear out in ten years.

Kate went me one better. Gee! she *did* have a time! Of course, woman-like, though she was a squaw, the first thing she thought about after she saw white ladies on the wharves at Skagway was clothes. Mrs. Saul Timney had to dress the part, and she was bound to do it, if it half killed her, which it did. She bought a whole civilized outfit of duds at the White House in 'Frisco, and got the chambermaid to help her get into 'em; that's where she got the first jolt. It wasn't so easy as it looked. She couldn't walk in the high-heeled shoes they wear here, and so she kept to moccasins. Corsets she gave up early in the game; they didn't show, anyway, being inside. Finally, she got a dressmaker to rig her up a sort of a loose red dress, that they call a Mother Hubbard. Her favourite cover was an ermine cape; she bought it because it cost more than anything else in the fur-store. She just splurged on hats and bonnets; I reckon she had a new one every day. The thing that tickled her

most was gloves, for her hands were good and little. She wore white ones all the time ; I s'pose it was because she felt she looked more like an American woman that way.

The swell togs she couldn't wear she bought just the same. We skated through town like a forest fire, me doing the talking and her the picking out. She got darned near everything that I ever knew women wore, and a big lot of others that I'd never heard of. She laid herself out on the flamdoodle that ladies wear under their clothes. Seemed like she couldn't bear to miss anything with lace on it. Say, ain't it queer, paying a hundred dollars for just a white night-gown with a little dincumbob embroidery ruff round the edge ? That's what got my game ; but Kate wanted it, and you bet your life she got what she wanted. Didn't the money come from her ?

Every time she picked a thing and pulled out the yellowboys to pay for it, her eyes stuck out. Of course, not being used to doing business that way, it looked to her like every clerk behind the counter was her slave, all ready to give her anything she said. She never got over her wonder at the ' medicine stones '—not till the very last.

She had to stop in front of every jewellery-store she saw, too, but I couldn't get her to buy anything

worth wearing. She just turned up her nose at diamonds and rubies, but at the sight of a cheap string of beads she went out of her head. She generally wore five or six necklaces of 'em over her cape. Lord ! I didn't care. What she wanted she got.

Well, after she'd let the money run away from her for a couple of weeks, she got tired of the game, and kind of home-sick. She begun to pine for cold weather and ice and all, while I was just beginning to enjoy the place. I tried to brace her up, and thinking it might please her to hear the seals bark at the Cliff House, we drove out in a hack. We fed elegant—champagne and hot griddle-cakes and fish-balls, to make her think she was in Alaska ; but it didn't do much good, and so I started her to spending again.

We were down to the White House Store one day, when I run slap into Flora Donovan, that used to live next door to us in Virginia City. She was only a kid when I went North ; she'd grown up into considerable of a woman now, but I knew her. So I went up to her, and offered to shake hands. She glared pretty hard till I told her who I was, and how money had come my way. It seems her folks had struck it rich too, and she had more money than she knew what to do with.

When Flora caught sight of Kate staring at her behind me, she flopped up one of those spectacles with handles, and her eyebrows went up at the same time. She froze like an ice-pack. I allow the two women didn't look much alike, but I wouldn't let anybody snub my wife if I could help it ; so I introduced them, calling Kate Mrs. Saul Timney, the way she liked to have me. Flora sprang something about being ' charmed,' and then said she had to be going. Said she hoped I'd call, but nothing about Kate, I noticed.

I followed her off with my eyes ; she was so pretty and high-toned now, the first decent white woman I'd talked to in years, and honest—— Oh, well, hang it ! a man's got no license to be ashamed of his wife ; but I don't know—Kate did look kind of funny in that red Mother Hubbard and the ermine cape and straw hat, with moccasins and five strings of glass beads. Dog gone it ! I hated myself for being ashamed of her, which I wasn't really, only somehow she looked different than she did before.

I tried to get her away, but she stood stock-still watching Flora, who had walked off down to the cloak department at the end of the aisle. But if Kate don't want to move, all hell and an iceberg can't budge her ; and I stood waiting to think how I'd square myself with her, feeling guilty enough,

though I was just as fond of my wife as ever. All of a sudden Kate made a break for the counter where Flora Donovan was buying a cloak. The clerks all knew Kate by this time, and the floor-walker chap would come on the hop-skip-and-a-jump and turn the shop upside down for her. So when she came up behind Miss Donovan, and pointed to three or four expensive heavy cloaks, and threw out a sack of double eagles to pay for 'em, letting the clerk take out what he wanted, she had everybody around staring at her, Flora included.

I could see well enough what was in Kate's mind: she had seen that I was just a little ashamed of her, for some reason, and that Flora didn't think she was in her class. Kate wanted to show she was the real thing and a sure lady, and the only way she knew how to prove it was to beat Flora at buying. Kate didn't exactly want to put it over her; she only wanted to make good as the wife of Saul Timney.

Flora only said, 'Your wife has very good taste, Mr. Timney,' and sailed into the ladies' underwear corner. Kate stuck to her like a burr. She was right at home there, and for about fifteen minutes it seemed like all the cash-boys in the world were running in and out packing away white things, just like Kate was a fairy queen giving orders. She laid

down 'medicine stones' on the counter till the flim-flams and thingumbobs almost dropped down off the shelves of themselves. I s'pose a man really has no business to be in a place like that, but I watched the two of 'em buy. Kate had actually got Flora going, and both of 'em emptied their sacks. Then Flora swept out, looking a hole through me, but never saying a word. I've heard afterwards that Miss Donovan was pretty well known to be close-fisted, and it must have hurt her some to let go of all that money, just on account of an Indian squaw. But the clerks behind the counter nearly went into fits.

Kate came up to me and said: 'I can buy more things than she can, can't I?'

And I said: 'Sure, of course you can, Kate; you could buy her right out of house and home!'

She looked a little relieved then, but I saw she was jealous, and the worst of it was I'd given her license to be. I tried to be as nice as I could, and bought her another necklace, and took her to see the kineto-scopes, and let her look through the telescope at the moon; but I saw she was still fretting about Flora. That night I met a fellow from the Yukon, and I left Kate at the hotel and made a night of it. I went to bed with considerable of a head, and when I woke up, towards noon, Kate was gone. She didn't show

up till the next day after that. I learned afterwards what happened.

Kate started out bright and early to find Flora. She had got into a black dress with spangles, patent-leather shoes, and a hat as big as a penguin. She carried with her all the cash we had at the hotel, running into four figures easy. The shopping district of San Francisco ain't such a big place, after all, and Kate and Flora only went to the best and highest priced stores ; so it wasn't long before they met.

As far as I could find out, Kate didn't have her hatchet out at all this trip, but she was just trying to make up to Flora and be nice to her, and show she was ready to get acquainted. You can guess what happened. Flora tried to pass Kate, but Kate just stood in the aisle like a house. It was no use for Flora to try and snub her, for Kate couldn't understand the kind of polite slaps in the face that ladies know how to give. The only thing was to get rid of her ; so Flora up and went out the front-door to her carriage.

Kate followed her out to the side-walk. When Flora got in, Kate got in right alongside, grinning all over, showing her sack of gold, and trying her best to be as nice as she could. Flora was clean flabbergasted. She didn't want to make a holy show of herself on the street by calling the police, and so she

told her driver to go home, as the best way out of it. So they drove to Van Ness Avenue, Flora throwing conniption fits, she was so mad, and Kate smiling and talking Chinook, with her big hat on one ear.

When they got to the house, Flora jumped out and loped up the steps, blazing, and slammed the door. Kate tried to follow, but the tight dress and tight shoes were too much for her, and she fell down. That got Kate's mad up, and when Kate's good and mad, she's a mule. She banged at the door, but no one opened. So she sat down on the front doorstep to wait till Flora came out. You know what Indians are. She was ready to wait all night ; she was used to nights six months long, and a few hours in a San Francisco fog didn't worry her a bit. She took off her shoes and loosened her dress, and stuck to the mat.

Finally, Flora sent out one of the hired help to drive Kate away. Kate pulled out one of her ' medicine stones ' that she had always found would work, and it worked all right. He went in with a twenty-dollar gold piece, and told all the rest of the help, and they came out one by one and got twenties, while Kate froze to the doorstep. Then Flora telephoned for the police, and a copper come up from the station to put Kate off the steps. He stopped when she handed him the first twenty. He put up his

club when she brought out two more and went back, after telling the Donovans he couldn't exceed the law.

There she stayed till eight o'clock next morning, but it finally got through her head that Flora would never leave while she was there, so she decided to hide out and lay for her. She went across the street, and sat down on the steps of the Presbyterian Church a couple of blocks away, where she drew a crowd of kids and nurse girls, till the cop on the beat came up and drove 'em away, and collected another pair of twenties.

About ten o'clock Flora, thinking the coast was clear, came out and got into her carriage. Kate was ready for her, holding up her skirt in one hand and her shoes in the other. The carriage drove off, and Kate fell in behind on a little trot. You know how Indians run ; they can keep it up all day, and you can't get away from 'em. Flora saw her, and made the driver whip up, and the procession started down Sutter Street.

There they went, lickety-split—a swell turn-out, with Flora yelling at the driver to go faster, and about half a block behind poor old Kate, right in the middle of the street on the car-track, in dinky, open-work silk stockings, with her shoes in one hand, going like a steam-engine. Her hat fell off as she

crossed Polk Street, but, Lord! she didn't care; she had barrels of 'em at the hotel. I guess they had a clear street all the way. It must have taken the crowd like a circus parade.

The police never caught on till they got to Kearney Street, and there I was standing looking for my wife. A copper came out to nail her for a crazy woman, but I got there first, and bundled her into a hack and drove her to the Palace Hotel.

When we got up to our rooms, she was so queer and strange that for a little while I didn't know but she had gone nutty, after all. She never said a word till she had straightened up her dress, and put on her shoes, and got out a new hat. Then she stood in front of a big looking-glass. Finally she turned loose on me.

'I want to be white, and have a thin nose and a little waist like an American woman. Where can I get that? How many medicine stones will it take to make me white?'

'Oh, Kate,' I said, 'don't talk like that, old girl. You're good enough for me,' I said. 'You can't buy all that, anyway.'

Then she said: 'You don't like me the way you like that other woman. How many medicine stones will it take to make you like me that much, just as if I was white?'

Of course, I was just as fond of her as ever, but she wouldn't believe it. She asked me again how much money it would take, and I had to tell her that the magic was no good for things like that.

That seemed to kind of stun her, and she began to mope and pine. She went back into her room, and puttered around some. I didn't have the heart to follow her and see what she was up to. When she came out, she had on her old loose dress and her moccasins. Over her head was the same shawl she wore when she came out of the Klondyke.

'Give me my medicine stones,' she said to me; 'I want all of them!'

She seemed to feel so sore, I went out and drew two thousand dollars in twenties, and brought 'em to her in two sacks. She didn't need to tell me what was up; she was going back to her own country and her own people. She was singing the song of the tribe, 'Death on the White Trail,' when I came in. I was going to stay in 'Frisco; that was what Kate wanted, and what Kate wants she gets every time, if I have the say-so.

It happened there was a steamer going next morning, and Kate didn't leave her room nor speak to me till it was time to go down to the dock. I got her ticket, and paid the purser to take good care of her. Even at the last we didn't do much talking;

what was the use? We both understood, and her people don't waste words.

When the boat pulled out, she stood on the upper deck looking at me. When the boat started, she opened her two sacks of coin, and begun to throw the money by handfuls into the bay, scattering them in shower after shower of gold, till it was all gone. . . .

Well, sir, the Yukon's the place, after all. I've blown in most all of my four hundred thousand, and what have I got for it? Kate will wait for me, the same way she waited for Flora Donovan. I've got one little claim I hung on to when I sold out the rest, and I've got the fever again. As soon as I've had my fun out, which won't be long, I'll make for the snow country. And some day, when Kate comes in from the fishing, she'll crawl into her hut and find me there, smoking by the fire. We won't either of us have to explain, because we'll both know.

CHAPTER VII

THE FORTY PANATELLAS (*continued*)

So with jest and story the night wore on, and James Wiswell Coffin, third, pulled steadily at his cigars. He smoked nervously now, with a ruthless determination to finish at any hazard. More than once in the early morning he had to snatch hastily at a biscuit and swallow it to keep his gorge from rising at his foolhardy intemperance; but he manfully proceeded with a courage induced by the firm belief that if he failed and attempted to evade payment of his bet, this gentle green-eyed Klondyker would make him pay through the nose. It is not safe in the West for a man to wager high stakes with no assets. The youngster was by no means sure of his endurance. Already the weeds tasted vilely bitter, and the fumes choked him pitifully, but still his sallies and repartees covered his fears as a shop-girl's raglan hides a shabby skirt.

By the watch he had succeeded in smoking his

first cigar in eleven minutes. Keeping fairly well to this pace, eight o'clock found him with but four left in the box. Rather sallow, with a faded, set grin, still puffing, still chaffing, the Harvard Freshman was as cool as Athos under fire. The Klondyker was as excited as a heavy backer at a six-days' go-as-you-please. The cigar-clerk had run out of racy tales and conundrums.

At last but three Panatellas remained.

'See here,' said the scion of the Puritans, 'I promised to smoke the whole box, didn't I, and to keep one lighted all the time? Well, I didn't say *only* one, and so I'm going to make a spurt and smoke the last three at once.'

The Klondyker demurred, and it was left for the cigar-salesman to decide. Coffin won. Making a grimace, the young fool, with a dying gasp of bravado, lighted the three, and while the others looked on with admiration, puffed strenuously to the horrid end. When the stumps were so short he could hardly hold them between his lips, the salesman pulled out a watch.

'Seven hours twenty-three minutes and six seconds—— Coffin wins!' he cried.

At this the Harvard Freshman toppled, and, dropping prone upon the floor, fell so grossly, so tempestuously ill that, for a while, his nausea held

him captive. The room went round. After a while he reeled to his feet, and felt the cool touch of gold that the Klondyker was forcing into his palm. The ragged clouds of rotting smoke, the lines of bottles behind the bar, and the sanded floor swam in a troubled vision, and then his mind righted.

'You were dead game all right, youngster,' the Klondyker was saying. 'I never thought you'd see it through, but you earned your money. I'll bet you never worked harder for a salary, though!'

Coffin tried to smile, and drank half a pitcher of water.

'Gentlemen,' he said solemnly, leaning against the wall-paper, 'one of life's sweetest blessings has faded. I have lost one of youth's illusions. I shall never smoke again. There is nothing left for me to do but join the Salvation Army and knock the demon rum. My heart feels like a punching-bag after Fitz has finished practising with it, and my head is as light as a new-laid balloon. As for the dark brown hole where my mouth used to be—brrrrrh! I move we pass out for fresh air. Funny, it seems a trifle smoky here! Wonder why? Come along and see me skate on the sidewalk. I'm as dizzy as Two-step Willie at the eleventh extra.' Then he patted the double eagles in his hand. 'Every one of you little yellow boys has got to go

out and get married. I must have a big family by to-night!'

The Klondyker gasped. 'For Heaven's sake, you don't mean to say you're going to begin again? You ought to be in the receiving hospital right now. Can you think of anything crazier to do after this? If you can I'll back you up. I haven't had so much fun since I left the Yukon. You're likely to tip over the city hall before night if I don't watch you.'

'Well, well, I can't quite keep up this pace, gentlemen,' said the cigar-clerk, 'and I have to open up the shop. I'll look you up to-night at the Morgue!'

He left hurriedly.

Once outside, Coffin's spirits rose. 'I never really expected to greet yon glorious orb again,' he said. 'Let's climb up to Chinatown and get rich.'

'Spending money is my mark; I'm a James P. Dandy when it comes to letting go of coin. I'm with you,' said the Klondyker; 'besides, I want to see how long before your luck changes.'

The Freshman led the way up past St. Mary's Church, without heeding the sacred admonition graved below the dial, '*Son, observe the time, and flee from evil!*' a warning singularly apposite in that scarlet quarter of the town. They passed up the

narrow Oriental lane of Dupont Street, the Chinatown highway, and as he pointed out the sights, Coffin discoursed.

'In the back of half these shops the gentle game of fan-tan is now progressing. Moreover, there are at least five lotteries running in the quarter that I know of. To wit: the "American," the "Lum Ki," the "New York," the "Ye Wah," and the "Mee Lee Sing." I propose to buck the Mongolian tiger in his Oriental lair, and watch the yellow fur fly by investing a small wad in a ticket for the half-past nine drawing. I worked out a system last night while dallying with the tresses of my Lady Nicotine, and I simply can't lose unless my luck has turned sour. I shall mark said ticket per said inspiration, and drag down the spoils of war. Kaloo, kalay! I chortle in my joy!'

'See here, then, you let me in on that,' insisted the Klondyker; 'you keep your hundred, and salt it down. You play my money this shot, and I'll give you half of what's made on it. You're a mascot to-day, and I've earned the right to use you.'

'All right, then, I agree to be fairy godmother until the sun sets. But I muchly fear you'll let the little tra-la-loo bird out of the cage with your great big coarse fingers. Never mind, we'll try it. Here we are now!'

He paused in front of a smallish Chinese restaurant on a side-street. In the lower windows were displayed groceries and provisions, raw and cooked, and from the upper story a painted wooden fretwork balcony projected, adorned with potted shrubs and paper lanterns.

'Behind this exhibition of split ducks, semi-pigs, mud-packed eggs from the Flowery Realm, dried abalones, sugar-cane from far Cathay, preserved water-melon-rind, candied limes, li-chi nuts, chop suey, sharks' fins, birds' nests, rats, cats, and rice-brandy, punks, peanut-oil, and passionate pastry, lurks the peaceful group that makes money for you while you wait. Above, in red hieroglyphs, you observe the legend, "Chin Fook Yen Company." This does not indicate the names of the several members of the firm, as is ordinarily supposed, but it is the touching and tempting motto, "Here Prosperity awaits Everybody, all same Sunlight." In the days of evil tidings I once made a bluff at being a Chinatown guide. It is easy enough, but I am naturally virtuous, and I was not a success with the voracious drummer and the incredulous English globe-trotter. But I picked up a few friends amongst the Chinks, as you'll see.'

They entered, to find a square room, from the centre of which a brass-stepped staircase rose to the

floor above. On one side of this office was a counter, behind which sat a fat, sleek Chinaman industriously writing with a vertical brush in an account book, pausing occasionally to compute a sum upon the ebony beads of an abacus. He looked up and nodded at Coffin, and, without stopping his work, called out several words in Chinese to those upstairs. The two went past the kitchens on the second floor to the top story, where several large dining-rooms, elaborately decorated in carved wood and coloured glass windows, stretched from front to rear. In one room a group of men, seemingly Eastern tourists, were seated on teak-wood stools at a round table drinking tea and nibbling at sugared confections distributed in numerous bowls. Expatiating upon the wonders of the place was what seemed to be one of the orthodox Chinatown guides, pointing with his slim rattan cane, and smoking a huge cigar.

Coffin led the way to a back-room, and, looking carefully to see if he were observed, knocked three times at an unobtrusive door. Immediately a silken curtain at the side was raised, disclosing a window guarded by a wire screen. In an instant it was dropped again, and the door was opened narrowly. Coffin pushed his friend through, and they found themselves in a square, box-like closet

or hallway. Here another door was opened after a similar signal and inspection by the look-out.

Inside this last barrier was a large room painted a garish blue. About a table in the centre several Chinamen were assembled, and doors were opening and shutting to receive or let out visitors. At a desk in the corner was sitting a thin-faced merchant, with horn spectacles and long, drooping white moustaches. To him Coffin went immediately and shook hands. Then he explained something of the workings of the lottery to the Klondyker. It was decided to buy a fifteen-dollar ticket, and they received a square of yellow paper where, within a border, were printed eighty characters in green ink. Above was stamped in red letters the words 'New York Day Time.' The price was written plainly across the face.

'Now I'll mark it,' said Coffin. 'You can mark a "high-low" system that is pretty sure to win, but it's too difficult for me—I was never much of a Dazmaraz at the higher mathematics. So I'll play a "straight" ticket; that is, I mark out ten spots anywhere I please. There are twenty winning numbers, and on a fifteen-dollar ticket, if I catch five of them, I get $30, six pays $270, seven pays $2,400, and eight spots pulls down the capital prize. If more than one ticket wins a prize the money is

divided *pro rata*, so we don't know what we win till the tickets are cashed in, downstairs in the office.'

He took a brush, and marked his ten spots, five above and five below the centre panel, and handed it to the manager, who wrote his name in Chinese characters down the margin. There was just time for this when the ceremony of drawing the winning numbers began. The manager brought out a cylindrical bamboo vessel, and placed in it the eighty characters found on the tickets, each written on a small piece of paper and rolled into a little pill or ball. Then he looked up at the Klondyker.

'You likee mix 'em up ?' he asked.

The stranger assented, and, having stirred up the pellets, was gravely handed a dime by the treasurer of the company.

The pellets were then drawn forth one by one, and placed in four bowls in rotation till all were disposed of. The manager now nodded to Coffin, who came up to the table.

'You shakee dice ?' said the Chinaman.

Coffin nodded.

'You see this die ?' he explained to the Klondyker; 'it's numbered up to four, and the number decides which bowl contains the lucky numbers on the ticket. Here goes! *Three!*'

The third bowl was accordingly emptied, and the numbers on the pellets of rolled paper were read off and entered in a book. The Chinese now began to show signs of excitement. Tickets were produced from the pockets of their dark blouses, and were scanned with interest as the winning numbers were called out one by one. They crowded to the shoulder of the manager as he unfolded the pellets, and jabbered unintelligible oaths and blessings as the characters were revealed. Coffin beckoned to one who appeared to have no investment, and showed him the joint ticket, asking him to point out the spots as they were read. The first five were unmarked, but then, to their delight, the long nail of the Chinaman's finger pointed to three spots in succession. In another minute two more marked characters won, and then, after a series of failures, the last two numbers read proved to be of Coffin's selection. The Chinaman's eye snapped, and he cried out a few words, spreading the news over the room. In an instant the two white men were surrounded, and a babel of ejaculations began.

'What the devil does it mean? Do we win?' asked the Klondyker.

'Do we win! Can a duck swim? We've got seven lucky spots! Twenty-four hundred dollars, if we don't have to divide with some son of a she-

monkey!' and Coffin, grabbing his hat in his right hand, pranced about the room, and began on the Harvard yell.

The Chinamen, shocked at the noise, and in imminent fear of attracting attention to the illegal enterprise, had grabbed him and stifled his fifth 'Rah!' when suddenly, with a hoarse yelp, the watchman at the look-out burst into the room, giving the alarm for a raid of the police, and threw two massive oaken bars across the iron door. In an instant the tickets, pellets, and books were swept into a sack, and the men scattered in all directions, sweeping down tables and over chairs to escape arrest.

'Run for your life, or we'll get pulled!' Coffin called out to the Klondyker, who still held the ticket in his hand, and he made a break for one of the blue doors. It was slammed in his face by a retreating scout. 'Over here!' the Klondyker cried, setting his foot to another door, and forcing it open. By this time the outer barrier at the entrance from the restaurant had been forced, and the police began with crowbars and sledge-hammers on the inner door. Coffin ran for the exit, but stumbled, and fell across a chair, striking his diaphragm with a shock that knocked the wind from his lungs. For fully a minute he lay there writhing, without the

power to move, gasping vainly for breath. The blows on the door were redoubled in energy, and of a sudden the wooden bars split and gave way, the lock shot off into the room, the hinges broke through the woodwork of the jambs, and the door toppled and fell. It was now too late for the Freshman to escape; a dozen men jumped into the room and seized him and the few Chinamen left. To his dazed surprise the attacking party was the very same group of men he had taken for Eastern tourists as he entered, now evidently plain-clothes detectives, who had been cunningly disguised to escape suspicion.

These, after their prisoners had been handcuffed, ran here and there, dragging more refugees by their cues in bunches from adjoining rooms and halls; but most had made good their escape through the many secret exits, hurrying, at the first warning, to the roof, to underground passages in the cellar, through the party walls to other buildings.

When the last man had been secured the crestfallen captives were taken downstairs, loaded into two patrol waggons, and driven to the California Street Station. The Klondyker was not amongst their number.

As the Freshman was searched, and his hundred dollars taken and sealed in an envelope with his

name, the booking-sergeant told him that if he wished to deposit cash bail with the bond clerk at the city hall he would be released. He might send the money by a messenger, who would return with his certificate of bail.

'How much will it be?' Coffin asked.

'One hundred, probably.'

'Then I can't pay a messenger, for that's exactly all I have with me.'

'Oh, well,' said the sergeant, looking at him indulgently, 'there's an officer going up to the hall on an errand, and coming back pretty soon. I'll get him to take up your money, if you want.'

The Chinamen were put into a cell together, and Coffin was locked in a separate compartment containing a single occupant, a wizened little man with a chin beard, wearing a pepper-and-salt suit. At the irruption of visitors there arose from the women's cell an inhuman clamour raised by two wretched drabs. They shrieked like fiends of the pit wailing in mockery at the spirits of the damned. Coffin put his hands to his ears.

His new companion regarded him with a watery blue eye.

'All-fired nuisance, ain't it? Gosh! they yelp like seals at the Cliff House! I wish the

sergeant would turn the hose on 'em. I would. They go off every twenty minutes like a Connecticut alarm-clock. Never mind, we'll get out of this soon. What were you pulled for ?'

Coffin narrated his adventures in Chinatown.

'Oh, you're all right then; it's just a periodical spasm of virtue by the police. But I'm in for it! They're goin' to sock it to me, by Jimminy!'

'What's the matter ?' Coffin asked.

The little Yankee crept over to the Freshman's ear and whispered mysteriously:

'Grand larceny! They ain't charged me with it, and they don't suspect I know, but they're holdin' me till they can collect evidence. And me a reformed man. I'm a miserable sinner, but I've repented, and I've paid back everything to the last cent!'

His confession, which was becoming perfervent, was here interrupted by a policeman, who was looking through the cells.

'Hello, Eli!' he said, with a sarcastic grin; 'back again ? I thought it was about time!'

'Say, what's our little blue-eyed friend been up to, officer ?' the Freshman inquired.

The man laughed. 'Vagrancy, of course! Just look at him. Ain't he got the eye of a grafter ? We find him begging on the street every little while,

but he'll get off with a reprimand. He always has plenty of money on him. He's nutty. Crazy as a hatter, ain't you, Eli ?'

He laughed again, and passed on.

'Did you hear that ?' cried the little man angrily. 'He pretends I ain't up for felony, but I am, though they can't prove it. It's persecution, that's what it is. I don't mind the fine for vagrancy, but I'm afraid if I have to go to gaol I'll lose my car.'

'Lose your car !' said Coffin, amused at the little old man's vagaries. 'You don't think a street-car will wait for you while you're bailed out, do you ?'

'Mine will,' Eli replied; 'that is, if it ain't stolen.'

'Stolen ! Gee whizz, you're an Alice in Wonderland all right ! Perhaps you will inform me how they steal street-cars in San Francisco, and how you happen to have one to be stolen.'

'I see you don't believe it,' said the Yankee, 'but it's as true as gospel. I'll tell you the whole story, and then you'll think better of me.'

So saying, he fastened his watery blue eyes upon the Freshman, and gave him the history of his life.

CHAPTER VIII

THE STORY OF THE RETIRED CAR-CONDUCTOR

I WAS born and brought up in Duxbury, Mass., and I had a close call to escape bein' named Wrestling Brewster, one of my mother's family names. My father voted for just plain Eli Cook, howsomever, and dad most always generally won. It might have made considerable difference to me, maybe, for, as it was, whether from my name or nature, I rather took after my father, who was no mortal good. Father was what Old Colony folks call 'clever,' just a shif'less ne'er-do-well, handy enough when he got to work, but a sort of Jack-of-all-trades and master of none. Never went to church, fished on Sundays, smoked like a chimney, and chewed like a cow, easy to get on with, and hard to drive—no more backbone than a clam, my mother used to say. And what he was I am, with just enough Brewster in me to make me repent, but not enough to hender me from going astray.

I come out here to Californy in '49, and hoofed it most all the way. I calculated to get rich without workin', but I reckoned without my host. I looked for something easy till I got as thin as a yeller dog, and for twenty year I held on that way by my eyelids, pickin' up odd jobs, and loafin' and whittlin' sticks in between times. Then I got a place as driver on the Folsom Street hoss-car line, and that was where I made my fortune by hook or crook till I retired.

If I'd had a drop more Brewster blood I wouldn't have did what I did, but I kind of fell into the way of piecin' out my salary the way everyone else did who worked for the company, and my conscience didn't give me no trouble for a considerable spell. It was only stealin' from a corporation, anyway, and I reckoned they could afford it with the scrimpin' pay they give us.

In them days the company ran them little double-ender cars with ten-foot bodies. When I got to the end of the route, and drove my team round and hitched up at t'other end, I had to take out the old Slawson fare-box and set it up in front, for they didn't have no conductors in early days. I s'pose I kind of hated to carry such a load of money, bein' more or less of a shirk, and I got into the way of turnin' her upside down and shakin' out a few nickels every time. They come out easy, I'll say

that for 'em, and it wan't no trick at all to clean up a dollar or so every day, and twice as much on Sundays.

Well, so long as all the boys was a-doin' the same thing the loss wan't noticed; but somehow or other the company got a few honest men on the line, and they turned in so much more money than we did every night that the old man smelled a mouse. He put in the new Willis patent fare-box that was durned hard to beat. It had a little three-cornered wheel inside that acted like a valve, and nothin' that went in would come out, either by turnin' the box upside down or by usin' the wire pokers we experimented with. They wan't nothin' for it but to git keys, and so keys we got. It looked a heap more like stealin' than it did before, but it was rather easier. Some of the boys was caught at it, but, as luck would have it, nobody never suspected me, and I took out my little old percentage regular as a faro dealer.

I salted down my money in the Hibernia Bank, and I called it my sinkin' fund, which it was for sure, sinkin' my soul down deeper and deeper into the bottomless pit. I'm a-goin' to make a clean breast of it, howsomever, and I own up I was about as bad as the rest of 'em, and four times as sharp at the game.

After a while the system was improved, and the company got new rollin'-stock, with all two-hoss cars. I was a conductor then, and I ran on No. 27 till I was off the road. The Gardner punch was my first experience in knockin' down fares right in the face and eyes of everybody, and I had figgered a way to 'hold out' long before I had the nerve to try it. But, Lord! it was as easy as fallin' off a log, when you knew how. You see, we sold a five-coupon ticket for a quarter, and we had to slice off a section for every fare with a candle-snuffer arrangement, the check droppin' into a little box on the under-jaw of the nippers. All we had to do was to 'build up' on 'em. You held back a lot of clipped tickets, with two, or three, or four coupons left, as the case might be, and you kept 'em underneath the bunch of regular tickets for sale. Say a man handed you a whole ticket for two fares. You made a bluff at cuttin' it, and handed him back a three-coupon ticket from underneath your rubber band. You kept his whole one for yourself, and sold it to the next passenger for two bits.

Well, Jim Williams was caught red-handed, and Gardner's system went to Jericho. Next they sprung the regular bell-punch on us, the kind you 'punch in the presence of the passenjaire.' We had no trouble with that. They was a dummy

palm-bell manufactured almost simultaneous, and we'd ring up fares without punchin' at all. The breastplate registers was worked similar, with a bell inside your vest connected with a button. It was as easy as pie, providin' nobody watched the numbers on the indicators.

I left the road before they adopted the stationary registers or clock machines. I admit they're ingenious, but still I ain't got no doubt that, given a good big crowd and no spotters, I could manage to make my expenses with the rest of the boys.

But I won't go round Robin Hood's barn to spin out the story. The result was that, after about fifteen years of patient, unremittin' industry, I had something like $12,000 in the bank, and what was left of my New England conscience shootin' through me like rheumatism. It didn't bother me so much at first, but when once Brewster blood begins to boil it don't slow up in a hurry. Eli Cook didn't seem to care a continental, but they was a whole lot of Pilgrim Fathers behind me that was bound to testify sooner or later.

I tried to settle down and get into some quiet business, where I wouldn't have no more trickery to do than, maybe, put a little terra alba in the sugar and peanuts in the coffee. But after lookin' round I hankered after makin' money easier, and so

I bought minin' stocks and hung on, assessment after assessment, like grim death, till, by Jimminy! one day I'll be durned if I didn't calculate I had $30,000 to the good if I sold. I pulled out the day before the slump. I don't know why Providence favoured my fortune, which was so wickedly come by, and I don't know why, after doin' so well, I didn't have spunk enough to pay back the company; but anyhow, I wan't yet waked up to feel full consciousness of sin, and I shut my ears to the callin' to repentance.

Now all this time, bein' of a South Shore family of seafaring men mostly, I had a hankerin' after the water. So when the first lots was cut up out to the beach, I bought a parcel of land on the shore. I used to go out there all the time to sit on my own sand, and recollect how it used to feel to get a good dry heat on my bare legs when I was a boy down to Duxbury. If they had only been clams there, I'd have been as happy as a pollywog in a hogshead of rain-water.

One day I was walkin' out there, and as I passed the company's stables I see a sign out, 'Cars for Sale—Cheap,' and I went in to see 'em. I speared round the yard, till what did I see but old 27, my car, settin' there without wheels, lookin' as shabby as Job's cat. I asked the foreman how much they wanted for it, and I got it for ten dollars. I hired a

dray, and moved the thing out to the beach that very afternoon. I set it up on two sills on my lot, calculatin' I could use it for a cabin to hang out in over Sunday, and it was as steady as Plymouth rock, and made as cute a little room as you'd want to see. Every time I went I tinkered round and fixed her up more till I had a good bunk at one end, lockers under the seats, and a trig little cellar beneath, where I kept canned stuff.

It wan't long before I regularly moved out and lived there for good. Just from force of habit, I expect, at first, I rung two bells every time I got on and one bell before I got off, and I always keep it up just as if the old car was really on the rails. I never went in and set down but I felt as if No. 27 was poundin' along towards Woodward's Gardens, with the hosses on a jog-trot. Sometimes when the rain was drivin' down and the wind blowin' like all possessed, and it was pitch-dark outside, with the surf rollin', I'd put down my pipe and go out on the platform, and set the brake up just as tight as I could. I don't know why, but it kind of give me a sense of security.

It wan't long before I begun to feel a positive affection for that old car, what with the years I'd spent on it, and livin' way out there to the beach alone with nothin' to think about but the way I'd

robbed the company. No. 27 was more like a pet dog than a house. You can talk about ships bein' like women and havin' queer ways and moods, but you go to work and take an old car, and it's more like folks than a second cousin, and it's got sense and temper, I'm persuaded of that.

But it wan't long before No. 27 begun to act queer. I noticed it a considerable spell before I realized just what was wrong. It wouldn't stay still a minute. It groaned and sighed like a sinner on the anxious seat. I couldn't ease it any way I tried. It worked off the sills, and just wallowed in the sand. The sand drifts like snow at the beach, and often I used to have to dig myself out the door after a sou'-wester. I didn't mind bein' alone so much, for I had a book of my Uncle Joshua Cook's sermons to read, but the way that old car talked to itself got on my nerves. The windows rattled, and sometimes a shutter would fall with a *bang* sudden, and I'd jump half out of my skin. Then, too, that stealin' was preyin' on my mind, and I couldn't help harpin' on it. They was a Slawson fare-box still on the front of the car, and finally I got to goin' in t'other way to avoid it. Then the green light got to watchin' me, and I begun to drink, for I felt the full qualms of the unrighteous, and the car itself seemed to know it was defiled by my sin.

Finally, one night I come home from the Cliff House, where I'd been warmin' up my courage, and when I got back to No. 27 I see the green lantern I'd left lit was a-burnin' low, almost out. I got up on the platform, and tried to ring two bells as usual, but the cord broke in my hands. I tried the door, but it wouldn't budge. That blamed car just naturally refused to recognise me, and wouldn't let me in. Then I sat down in the sand and cried like a fool, and wondered what was wrong.

It bust on me like a light from the sky and the callin' of a sinner to repentance, sayin', ' Come now, this is the appointed time.' All I'd done in the old days riz up in front of me, and right there I experienced a change of heart, and was convicted of sin. It come sudden, and I acted sudden. I didn't stop to think nor reason, nor to set my mortal mind against the judgment of Heaven and that car ; but I rose up confident of grace, and went round to the front platform where the fare-box was, and dropped in a nickel and tried the bell. The cord wan't broke on this side, and she rung all right. The light flared up again, and the door opened as easy as a snuff-box. I was saved.

From that time on I never got aboard without payin' my fare, and when the box was full I'd turn it over to the treasurer of the company. Of course

I might have drawn out my money in the bank and paid it all up at once, but it seemed to me that this means was shown me so that I would be reminded of my wickedness every day and keep in the road of repentance. But even then sometimes I backslid and fell from grace when I emptied out the box. Some of the money would stick to my fingers, and it seemed as if I couldn't stop stealin' from the company. But afterwards I'd repent, and put in a quarter or even a half-dollar for my fare to make up, and in that way I went on tryin' to lead a better life, and keep in the straight and narrer road of salvation.

Well, I thought then that No. 27 would settle down and give me some peace of mind, but it wan't long before that car begun to get oneasy again. I didn't know what in creation to make of it, and it beat all the way it took on. I drew out $5,000 of good securities that was payin' 9 per cent., and sent it all in gold coin packed in a barrel of barley to the company, but that didn't do no good at all. The car was plum crazy, and nothin' seemed to satisfy the critter. It settled and sobbed and sighed like a fellow that's been jilted by a flirt. They wan't no doin' nothin' with it. I puttered over it, tightened all the nuts, but it snivelled and whined like a sick pup every time the wind blew. When the fog come in

the drops of water stood on the window-panes like tears, and every gale made the body tremble like a girl bein' vaccinated. The old car must be sick, I thought, and I greased all the slides and hinges with cod-liver oil. The thing only wheezed worse than ever. I thought likely it might be just fleas, for the sand is full of 'em, and I sponged the cushions with benzine. It wan't no more use than nothin' at all!

Perhaps I ain't got no call to boast, but I flatter myself I found out what was lackin' as soon as most would have done. Howsomever, I spent a good deal of time walkin' round the beach thinkin' it over. They's quite a colony of us out there now; seemed like my car drew out a lot of others, until they's more than a baker's dozen of 'em scattered around, built up and managed in different ways, accordin' to the ideas of their owners. Some h'ist 'em up and build a house underneath, some put two alongside and rip out the walls, some put 'em end to end, some make chambers of 'em, and some settin'-rooms. They call the colony Carville-by-the-Sea, and it looks for all the world like some new-fangled sort of Chinatown.

I was walkin' round one day, inspectin' the new additions to the place, when I see a car I thought I recognised. I went up, and if it wan't a Fifth Street body, and, as far as I could see, it must have

been the very one old 27 used to transfer with in the old days! It was numbered 18, and I remembered how she used to wait for us on the corner when we was late. Then I understood what was the matter with my car. It was just naturally pinin' away for its old mate!

I went right to the owner and bought No. 18 at his own price. I would have paid $25 for her if he'd asked it. I moved her on to my lot, put a foundation under her, sideways to 27, like an ell to a farmhouse. And it seemed to me I noticed old 27 give a grunt, and settle down in peace and contentment. I was a good guesser. I hitched 'em together with a little stoop, covered over so as to make the two practically one, and then I give the whole thing a fresh coat of white paint, and cleaned up the windows, and swept out till it was all spick and span. And I never had no trouble with No. 27 after that, nor with my own conscience neither, for now the money's all paid back with interest.

Well, sir, maybe you won't believe it, and maybe you will, but about a year after the two was hitched together a funny thing happened. One mornin' I went outdoors, and I see somethin' on the sand beside of No. 18. My eyes stuck out like a fifer's thumb when I recognised what it was. It was a plum new red wheelbarrow!

CHAPTER IX

THE INVOLUNTARY SUICIDE

WARMED by his copious draughts of wine, stimulated by the comradeship of his fellow-adventurers, and his stomach packed to the top corner with rich foods, Professor Vango left Coffee John's rejoicing in a brave disregard for the troubles that had been for so long pursuing him. His superstitious terrors had subsided, and for a while he was a man again.

Clay Street was empty, and stretched black and narrow to the water front. Below him lay the wholesale commercial quarter of the town, with its blocks of deserted warehouses silent and dark. It was a part of San Francisco almost unknown to the ex-medium, and now, at midnight, obscure and bewildering, a place of possibilities. He was for adventures, and he decided to seek them in the inscrutable region of the docks.

He stepped boldly down the street, but it was not long before the echoes of his footsteps struck him

chill with dread. The packing-cases upon the curb cast shadows where fearsome things might lurk. He began to watch with a roving eye the crossings and alleys where some form might come upon him unawares, and he cast sharp glances over his shoulder for the appearance of the spirit that had cowed him. The thought of Mrs. Higgins brought him back to his old torture. He felt as if she were always round the next corner.

He had almost reached East Street when he yielded to his qualms, and bolted into the warmth and light of the Bowsprit Saloon to drown his forebodings in two schooners of steam beer. So disappeared Coffee John's luck-dime, and the stimulating effects of his exordium with it. Vango's short glow of comfort was, however, but a respite, for shortly after midnight the bar closed, and he was sent forth again into the perilous night.

He was pacing up and down the stone arcade of the Ferry Building, dismally anticipating the prospect of walking the city streets alone with his curse, when it occurred to him that he might possibly beat his way to Oakland. Oakland was less strenuous; it was calm, sober, respectable, free from the distressing torments of San Francisco. Many a time he had met Mrs. Higgins upon the dock behind the waiting-room, and he knew the way well. He

dodged slyly up the waggon-track, round the corner of the baggage-room, to the slip where the steamer *Piedmont* was waiting to set out on her last trip. As he came to the apron a few belated commuters were running for the boat. He joined them without being observed, and was hurried aboard by a warning from the deck-hands. Just as he reached the bib the bridge was drawn up, the hawsers cast off, and with a deep roaring whistle the vessel started, gathered way, and, urged by the jingle-bell, shot out of the slip into the waters of the bay.

The crowds went forward, upstairs, to the protection of the cabin, but Professor Vango stayed by the after-rail alone, where a chain was stretched across the open stern. A ragged mist lay upon the harbour, hanging to the surface of the water like a blanket, torn open sometimes by a passing gust of wind, and closing up to a thicker fog beyond. High in the air it was clearer, and the stars shone bright.

The thumping paddle-wheels, the phosphorescent waves, and the gray obscurity of the night wrought heavily upon Vango's emotion, and the fumes of alcohol mingled in his brain. He was not happy, things went round a bit, and he had hard work controlling his thoughts. He longed for the gay cheerfulness of the saloon above, but he felt a need of the sharp night air to revive him first. But he watched

the stairway suspiciously, feeling sure that the ghost of Mrs. Higgins, if she were to appear, would come that way.

In point of fact, a woman did soon descend from the upper deck, and stood at the bottom of the stairs in some uncertainty, gazing about her. She was a heavy, middle-aged blonde, in a long black cape and veil, the type of a thousand weak, impressionable widows, and in the dusk, through the glaze of Vango's eyes, a passable counterfeit of the late lamented Mrs. Higgins. She soon perceived him, and came forward a few steps, while he retreated as far away, putting her off with futile gestures. Curious at this exhibition, the woman walked up to him with a question on her lips.

She was, in all probability, in search of nothing more than a glass of water, but the medium had no more than time to hear, 'Tell me where——' before he had mentally completed the inquiry for her. 'Where—where is Lilian?' she meant, of course. Appalled, he had jumped over the chain in the stern, and as she approached with that demand piercing his conscience-stricken soul, he shrank back unconsciously. The first step carried him to the extreme end of the boat, the second led him, with a splashing fall, into the bay. The waters closed over him, and the steamer swept on.

When he came to the surface, spluttering but sober at last in the face of a new and more tangible danger, he heard the rising staccato of a woman's shriek, and saw a pyramid of lights fading into the fog. Then he sank again, and all was cold, black, and wet. . . .

He rose to the surface in a space clear of mist, dimly lighted by a wisp of moon. A few feet away a fruit crate bobbed upon the waves in the steamer's wake, and for this he swam. By placing it under his body, he found he could float well enough to keep his nose out of water tolerably secure from drowning, for a time at least.

The mist closed in upon him, was swept asunder, and shut down again. The current was bearing him towards the harbour entrance, he decided, and as he had fallen overboard about opposite Goat Island, he must by this time be in the fairway, drifting for the Golden Gate and the Pacific. He might, if his endurance held out, catch sight of some ship anchored in the stream and hail her crew. But no lights appeared, and he grew deathly cold and stiff. . . .

In Professor Vango's ears the sobbing of the siren on Lime Point was lulling him to a sleep that promised eternal forgetfulness, and the Alcatraz Island bell was tolling gruesomely of his passing,

when his senses were aroused by a brisker note that came in quick, padded beats through the fog. He summoned his drowsy wits for a last effort, and gazed into the gloom. Suddenly, piercing the cloudy curtain drawn about him, came a small launch, stern on, churning its way at full speed straight at him.

In another moment it would have sped past him, to be swallowed up in the darkness again ; but with a mighty struggle he threw himself at the boat, and, dodging the whirling propeller, clutched the rail with a violence that made the craft careen. It dipped as if to throw him off, but Vango held on, and screamed hoarsely for help. No reply came from the boat, nor was anybody to be seen in it, so at last he made shift to climb aboard and reach the cockpit. The launch righted itself, and, rolling heavily, plunged on.

The vapour and darkness lay about him like a pall, muffling even the outlines of the boat itself. No lights were burning aboard, but an occasional spark flashed from the dynamo on the engine. Shivering, perplexed, terrified, but grateful for his preservation, and wondering where his fate had led him, the professor started on a further examination of the launch.

He had taken but two steps when his foot struck

a soft something extended upon the floor of the cockpit. His teeth chattered with fear as he groped down and made it out to be a human form. That it was a woman he discovered by the long hair which had overflowed her shoulders in crisp waves, and a touch of her body showed that she was still alive. He lifted her to a sitting posture on the seat, then loosened her dress at her neck, and chafed her wrists and temples. Her breath soon came in gasps, and she sighed heavily and sat erect with a shudder. She gazed into his face in the dimness, then cast her eyes over the boat and fell to weeping.

So for some time the launch, carrying its two wretched passengers, and what more Vango dared not guess, plunged on insanely through the fog. The medium knew nothing of practical affairs—psychology was his art and chicanery his science—but even had he been mechanic enough to stop and reverse the engine in the dark, it would have taken a considerable acquaintance with the Bay of San Francisco to have set and kept any logical course in such a night. Wrapped in a tarpaulin which he found by him, under which his dripping form shivered in misery, the unhappy man sat baffled, mystified, hopeless, too beat about in his mind even to wonder. The woman cried on, and the propeller

kept up its rhythmic thud, thud, thud, dragging the little vessel where it would.

Suddenly the swing of the choppy sea flung the woman at full length across the seat, and brought her to her senses. She arose now and scanned the fog, then peered curiously at the medium.

'Where are we? Where in Heaven's name did you come from?' she cried sharply, and she approached him with a searching gaze.

Trickster that he was, he sought some wile to outwit her. He mumbled something about having fallen off Fisherman's Wharf.

She stumbled to the cuddy under the seat, and brought out a lantern and a box of matches. With these she obtained a light, and held it flaring in Vango's face.

'I don't know who you are,' she said, 'but you've got to help me get this boat back. Are you armed?'

The medium made an emphatic denial, for the woman's face was sternly set. She was indubitably a quadroon, by evidence of her creamy, swarthy skin and the tight curls of her hair. Her dark eyes burned in the lamplight under heavy knotted brows, her full lips drawing apart like a dog's to show a line of white straight teeth. She was the picture of Judith ready to strike, and Vango trembled under

her gaze till she turned from him with an expression of contempt.

'Come forward and help me with the machinery,' she commanded. 'We can't keep on Heaven knows where at full speed backwards through weather like this. Fi-fi, now, and mind your feet!'

They went to the tiny engine, where, fumbling with the lever and stop-cocks, she brought the machinery to a stop. The silence crowded down upon them as if someone had just died. Vango noticed that the woman kept between him and the starboard rail with some secret intent, and as the two eyed each other, he caught sight of a revolver swinging from her belt. He saw something else also that made his heart stop beating for an instant, and then the quadroon held up her hand and listened attentively.

'Do you hear a bell?' she asked.

Scarcely had she spoken when, in the distance, a fog whistle sang out across the water, and through the flying scud a yellow light blinked and went out.

'We're right off Alcatraz,' she said. 'Here, you stand by this lever and mind my orders. Watch now how I do it. Way forward for full speed ahead, way back to reverse, and midway to stop, and turn off the naphtha at this throttle. I'll take the wheel, and we'll make across for Lombard Street

wharf. Keep a look-out ahead, and let me know the instant you see a light or anything.'

She went aft to the wheel, and the launch forged ahead at half-speed with Vango shuddering at the engine. But it was not only the piercing wind that froze him stiff as he stood, for there was a ghastly horror aboard which was almost unbearable. As the woman had stood by the engine, swinging her lantern to show the working of the machinery, the light had sought out one corner after another, and though she had stood between, the rays fell once upon an object protruding from beneath the seat. It was a boot—there was no mistaking the outline, though the light had touched it for but an instant. With all his resolution he put the sight out of his mind and said no word to her, for her eyes terrorized him, and he dared not question.

She had, however, left the lantern behind to illuminate the machine, and it now slanted past the naphtha reservoir and flickered on the toe of that foot. He tried to remove his eyes from it, but the thing held him with a morbid fascination. Look where he would, it stuck in the end of his eye, and held him in an anguish. He kept his hand ready to the lever, and succeeded in obeying the woman's orders to stop, go ahead, or back, but he acted as one hypnotized.

In about half an hour a dim light off the bow warned them off Lombard Street pier, and from here they crawled slowly past the water front, guided by the lights on the sea-wall and the lanterns of ships in the stream. Below the Pacific Mail dock their run was straight for Mission Rock, and from there to the Potrero flats; but they were continually getting off their course and regaining it, beating about this way and that, confused in direction by the lights in the fog.

During this time the two exchanged hardly a word that did not have to do with the navigation of the boat. Vango glanced back occasionally to see her silhouetted against the mist as she bent to one side and the other, and the distressing tensity of the situation did not prevent him now from racking his wits to find some possible explanation of her identity and purpose. He was a keen observer, and used to making shrewd guesses, but this was too much for him.

At last, in the gray of the dawn, the launch arrived off Hunter's Point, and the medium's eyes were straining through the murk to see some landing-pier, when he received a sudden summons to stop the boat. He turned off the naphtha and looked up at the woman, who beckoned him to come aft. He flattened himself against the rail in terror of her,

for, sure enough that one murder had been done aboard the launch, he feared another.

'Now,' said the quadroon woman, 'I want to know who you are and all about you.'

In a few stuttering syllables he told her his story, persisting with a childish fatuity in the deceit he had already begun, and welding to it bits of truth from the strange procession of events that had carried him through the past few months. When he mentioned the fact that he was a medium, he noticed a change in the woman's attitude immediately. His cunning awoke, and the sharper began to assert himself, following this clue, telling of how many persons he had aided with his wonderful clairvoyant powers, and the success of his trances. It is needless to say that he did not mention Mrs. Higgins, nor his reason for having given up his practice. As he rolled off the glib catch-words and phrases of his trade, he watched the woman sharply through his drooping eyelids with the agile scrutiny of a professional trickster, and sought in her appearance some clue to her secret.

With all her determination the woman was undoubtedly sadly distraught. The pistol by her side hinted at violence. Her dishevelled hair, the distraction of her garments, her clenched fists and tightened brows, told clearly of some moving ex-

perience. Above all, the corpse beside the engine and her attempts to hide it proclaimed some secret tragedy. While her mouth trembled her eyes were steady. If he made a wrong guess it might not be well for him. At the end of his explanations she had melted in a burst of feminine credulity and hunger for the marvellous.

'Then you can help me!' she exclaimed, throwing herself upon his leadership in a swift submission to the dominant sex. 'You *must* help me! I am in great trouble, and what is to be done must be done quickly. Can't you hold a sitting now? I want to find something as soon as I can—it is of the greatest importance; I would give any price to know where to find it. You must get your spirit friends to help me!'

The medium shuffled.

'You're rather nervous, and the conditions ain't favourable when a party is excited or sufferin' from excitin' emotions. The proper degree of mutuality ain't to be obtained unless a sitter is what you might call undisturbed.' Then he put all his shrewdness into a piercing gaze. 'Besides, you got murder on you. I see a red aura hoverin' over you like you had bloody hands!'

At this the quadroon burst out:

'I haven't; but I wish I had, and it isn't my fault!'

'Confession is good for the soul of a party,' Vango said with unction.

'I'll tell you everything if you'll only promise to help me. I am innocent of any real crime, I swear before God! But I tried to kill a man to-night. It was in self-defence, though!'

She took the lantern and led the way to the engine, and, setting the light on the seat, pointed silently to the body. 'Look at him!' she said.

After a heroic conflict with his repugnance the medium rolled the corpse over till it lay face up. The dead man was a Chinaman; he could see that by his clothes and hair, although the face was half masked with clotted blood. Two shocking gashes in the forehead turned Vango sick with horror.

Vango looked up at the woman with fear in his eyes and asked:

'Who was the deceased?'

'It was my husband,' she said, and her sobs choked her. 'We must get him ashore and put him in the house, and then we can decide what next, and perhaps you can help me. There's our pier over there;' and she pointed out the signal light on a little wharf running out from the gloom. She again took the wheel, and the launch was docked at the pier.

As Vango disembarked and prepared to help

her with the corpse, the quadroon woman stopped him.

'Here!' she said, pointing to a large wooden case in the bow, 'this must go ashore first. Take it into that shed there, and watch out that you're not seen. It won't do for the police to see it or any of the neighbours. I'd rather they saw the body!'

She stooped and untied a coil of rope from the case, and then the two lifted it to the floating stage. It weighed something over a hundred pounds, and it was all they could do to carry it together up the steep incline and along the pier to the shed. The woman took a key from her pocket and unlocked the door. When the case was inside the room, which was scantily furnished with a few chairs and tables, they returned to the launch.

As they approached the stage Vango thought of the woman's request for a séance, and her words struck him as curious. He asked her carelessly what it was she wished to find.

'A scrap of red paper with Chinese writing on it,' was the reply. She had no more than uttered the words when, glancing over at the launch, Vango saw on the floor in the rays of the lantern a red spot. Looking more closely, he saw that it was undoubtedly the very paper the woman wanted. He turned suddenly and faced her to prevent her

seeing it, and seized her hand. Then he sighed heavily, passing his free hand over his eyes.

'I feel a vibration of a self-independent message from my control,' he said, and fetched a dramatic shudder. 'They is a kind of a pain in my head, as though a party had passed out of a stab, like.'

This revelation was made in a die-away voice, as if from many miles off, and he glanced through a slit in his lids at the quadroon to see how she was taking it. Then he shuddered again more violently, but this time without dissimulation. His hand gripped hers like a wrestler's, his eyes leaped past her, over her shoulder, staring, for there, dimly shadowed in the obscurity, holding up a spectral arm in warning, was Mrs. Higgins!

Vango's soul was torn between greed and fear. Here was another dupe who could restore his fortunes, the way to cajole her plain before him; there was the threatening form of his Nemesis protesting against his roguery, and he faltered in dread.

'Oh, what is it, what is it?' the quadroon woman cried piteously.

The medium's cupidity won, and the credulous woman in the flesh was more potent than her sister in the spirit. He shut his eyes against the phantom and went desperately on:

'She gives to me this message: What you're a-lookin' for will be found sooner than what you expect, and you'll come by it on the water. You'll be guided to it by a party who is a good friend to you and you can trust, and she gives me the letter 'V.' He's a dark-complected man with a beard, and there'll be money a-comin' to him through your help. And she tells me that conditions will be favourable after a while.'

Having trembled again and sighed himself back to life, the medium turned to her drowsily, as if he had just been called from bed. 'Where am I?' he said in mock surprise; and then, with a groan of relief as he saw that Mrs. Higgins had disappeared, he added: 'Oh, what was I sayin'? I must have went into a trance, didn't I?'

The quadroon was in a high tremor of suspense.

'What is your name? You never told me,' she demanded.

'My name?' he repeated, with a baby stare. 'Why, Vango—Professor Vango. Why?'

'Then you're the man!' she cried. 'Come, help me take the body ashore, for we must get him to Chinatown as quickly as the Lord will let us.'

He waited till she had jumped into the boat and had laid her hand to the corpse, and then, climbing

over the bow, he snatched for the paper and waved it in the air.

'Did you say it was a scrap of red paper you lost?'

She sprang at him, and looked closely at the Chinese characters written upon it.

'Wong Yet is one of them!' she cried. 'This is the very piece I wanted! Now my poor husband can be avenged! God bless you, professor! you have proved your part of the message is true, and I reckon I'll prove mine. Find the other half of this piece of paper for me—you can do it easy with your spirit guides—and I'll give you a thousand dollars for it. But now we must hurry!'

They stooped over the dead Chinaman, and with Professor Vango at the shoulders and the quadroon at the knees, the corpse was carried up the landing-stage and along the pier to the shed. Here was hitched a pitifully dirty white horse, harnessed to a disreputable covered laundry-waggon, spattered with adobe mud. Into this equipage they loaded the remains, piled the case in the rear, and buttoned down the curtains. Then the woman mounted with Vango to the seat, and drove as fast as their miserable nag would take them for the Potrero.

As they turned into the San Bruno road the quadroon began her promised confession. Over-

wrought as she was by the tragedy of the night, she could not proceed calmly, but was swept with passions of despairing sorrow and vindictive rage. The medium, however, unmoved by her suffering, eyed her craftily, watching his chances to feed upon her superstitious hopes.

CHAPTER X

THE STORY OF THE QUADROON WOMAN

I RECKON you don't guess a coloured person can hate white folks as much as white folks hate niggers, but they do sometimes, and I despise a white man more than if I were a sure-enough black woman. I'm a quadroon, but I'm a heap prouder of the quarter black blood in my veins than I am of the three parts white. The black comes from the kindest, gentlest race that ever lived, and the white streak is from the vilest people I ever knew. If I could have my way, I'd be all African.

My daddy was born fairer than a good many white trash. Some folks never knew he was a mulatto; he looked more like a Chinaman, except that he had a little wave in his hair. My ma died when I was born. Daddy wanted me to be educated, so I was sent to Tuskagee Institute, where I learned nursing. After that we lived a little way out of Mobile, and we were right happy for a good while. I used to make

right smart of money with my sick folks sometimes.

Well, about two years back there was an awful crime committed near our place, and all the whites went pretty near crazy. You don't have to be told what it was, and you know what happens down South, and what law amounts to in those parts. Any coloured man that is once suspected has no show at all. Daddy was innocent, of course; but if he'd been guilty, I'd have stood up for him just the same. He was put in gaol, and they got up a mob to lynch him. I got wind of it just in time. There was a sheriff's deputy who was fond of me, and he and I managed to get daddy out and started West. Then the excitement cooled down some, and I didn't hear much talk, and we reckoned daddy was safe for sure.

I had no idea just where daddy had gone till one day I was looking over the *Mobile Register*, and I come on a 'Personal' that made me prick up my ears. It looked like it might have been written by my daddy for me to see. It was addressed 'Aber,' and when I turned the word backwards, the way you do sometimes with funny-sounding words, I saw it made my own name, 'Reba.' It read like this:

'ABER: Shall answer no further requests, as nobody can identify. Sheriff called off.—ODOD.'

Now, Odod was just Dodo backwards; that was my pet name for daddy when I was little. The word 'Sheriff' seemed likely, but I couldn't understand that about 'requests.' Then I thought to read the first letters of each word, like the acrostics daddy and I used to work out together in the *Youth's Companion*, and there it was, easy—just 'San Francisco.' Then I knew daddy was safe in California, and wanted me to come on.

I packed right up, and bought a ticket, hoping to find him somehow when I got there. I didn't think anybody would suspicion my leaving, but I had no idea how hellishly cruel white folks can be till I had gone too far to come back. Just after we left New Orleans I thought I saw a man following me. I wasn't right certain till we changed cars at El Paso, but then I knew he was a sure-enough detective.

Talk about bloodhounds! That man never left me out of his sight for a minute. He sat in the corner, with his hat pulled over his face, and I could just feel his eyes boring a hole in my back. I had no money for a sleeping-car, and so every time I dozed off in my seat I had nightmares about him. At Yuma we had to wait eight hours, and I tried to give him the slip there; but he hung on to me. I saw it was no use; I had to take the chances on tiring him out in 'Frisco.

First thing I did after I got to the Golden West Hotel was to mail a personal to the *Herald*. It read like this :

'ODOD : Any money will assist the cause. Help earnestly desired. We are in trouble.—ABER.'

I knew if he saw this message he'd see it meant, 'Am watched. Wait.'

Well, I can't tell you half what I went through that first week, with the detective turning up everywhere I went, till I was afeard I'd die of the strain. Sometimes I just felt like murdering him to get him out of the way. I didn't care so much for myself, but I was in mortal terror lest he'd catch sight of daddy and arrest him. I watched my chance, and one night I went to bed early, leaving word at the office to be called at five next morning. Then at two o'clock I got up and went out, leaving all my things in the hotel.

I took a room down on Third Street, near Minna, and for three weeks I was mighty careful where I went, waiting for the deputy to leave town. I got a few jobs of nursing, so I paid my way for a spell; then I just couldn't stand it a day more, and I risked getting word to daddy. So I put another personal in the paper, telling him, the same way as before, to

meet me at the old Globe Hotel in Chinatown next night. That seemed to be the safest place in the city by what I had found out. You know, the old Globe used to be right smart of a hotel in early days, but now there are hundreds of Chinamen living in it. It's like an ant-hill, full of all sorts of ways and corners to get out.

I waited on the steps, keeping a sharp eye out for daddy. But I hadn't been there more than ten minutes before I saw, not my dear old Dodo, but the detective who had followed me all the way West. I ran down the steps, and walked up Dupont Street as fast as I dared, never looking round once nor letting on I had seen him. My only thought was to head daddy off before he got near the detective; then I reckoned I could lead that hound off on a wild-goose chase, and get home safe.

When I got to the corner of Washington Street, only a matter of a block away, I ran smack into a man. He grabbed me in his arms, and was crying over me before I recognised him by his voice as daddy; for he had a light wig and a dyed moustache, and wore blue spectacles. I had no time to kiss him even once; I was so afeard of the detective, who was coming up only a little way back. I just whispered to him: 'The detective; run for your life!'

Daddy gave one glance over his shoulder, and ran

up Washington Street. The detective saw him go, and dashed after him, and I followed them both. They turned up a flight of steps into a big doorway, a little piece up the block.

I saw by the sign over the door that it was a Chinese theatre they had gone into. A red calico curtain was hung across the upper part of the stairway. It was so sudden and horrible I didn't know what to do. I gave up all hope. I saw poor old daddy arrested, handcuffed, and taken all the way back to Mobile, and put in gaol again. I couldn't bear to think what would happen after that.

But I just had to find out what was going on inside, so I paid the man at the door fifty cents, and went up the stairs. I had never been in such a place before, of course, and at first I had no idea what to do or where to go. There was no sign of daddy or the detective anywhere, and the place was filled with a great crowd of Chinamen on the seats. The only white people I saw were a lady and two men sitting up on one side of the open stage. I was bewildered and frightened to death, for there was a horrible noise of big gongs and squeaking fiddles, and actors in queer costumes singing and talking in shrill voices It was like a fearful dream to meet daddy and lose him so soon, and then find myself in such a crazy place as that theatre, and know that he was right

near somewhere, with that officer on his track. Perhaps they were fighting that very minute; perhaps he was already captured or shot, and I could do nothing to save him. With all this racing through my head, and the din and the smell of smoke and opium, I nearly fainted.

A Chinaman came down the crowded aisle and took me up to a seat beside the tourists on the stage, and there I had to sit in front of that crowd of coolies while the play went on and on and on. I have seen Chinese plays enough since, but then it was all new and terrible; for the orchestra was right near me, making such a noise that I thought I'd go mad, and the actors kept coming in and going out past me reciting in a sing-song. I wanted to scream. I felt that something awful was happening right behind me somewhere, and I couldn't see it. It seemed as if all these Chinamen must know where daddy was, if they'd only tell; and yet I didn't dare ask, for I was afeard of the detective.

Away up over the stage was a break in the wall, where the ceiling went up higher, and there was a little window almost above my head. There once I saw a head stuck out, and a Chinaman looked at me long and hard. This made me more frightened than ever.

Just when I thought I couldn't stand it a minute

longer, I heard the voice of a white man swearing in the dressing-room behind the stage, and then the detective came through the curtain looking like he was mad enough to kill somebody. Frightened as I was at him, my heart was nigh ready to break with joy, for I knew that daddy must have escaped from him somehow. He looked over the audience from the floor to the galleries where the women were, and finally went out.

As soon as he was out of sight, a Chinaman came up to me and grinned.

'You likee see actor dlessing-loom ?' he said.

Something told me that he was a friend, and I got right up and followed him. We went into the dressing-room, where all the costumes were hung on the wall and the actors were putting on queer dresses and painting their faces, then up a flight of stairs. I kept my eyes open sharp, looking everywhere for daddy. Above the stage was the joss-house room of the theatre, with punks burning, but the place was empty. Above that was the kitchen, where a lot of men were cooking over little open fires, but daddy wasn't there.

Then we turned a corner, went down some steps, and came to a padlocked door. My guide unlocked it, put me outside on a platform, whistled, and left me, after saying, 'You keep still ; bimeby you catch

him.' Then I heard his footsteps going back into the building.

I was alone on an outside balcony, looking down into a dark alley three floors below. All around me in the dusk was a mess of roofs and ramshackle sheds. I was mighty scared, it was that spooky and lonely. Only for the thought of daddy, I would have run or screamed.

After awhile a door opened and a man beckoned to me. We went through a little hall with doors on each side and dark passages leading off every which way. Down these, in and out, till I was more confused than ever, and then finally he knocked at a little door. It was opened and I was pushed inside.

It was a tiny box of a room, low and narrow. On a broad bunk at one side two Chinese actors in costume were lying smoking opium-pipes. Leastways, I thought they were Chinamen, but as soon as the door was shut one jumped up and took me in his arms. I screamed and fought to get away, but he called me Reba, and I knew it was daddy. No wonder I didn't recognise him before. He had on a wig with a long queue and a gold-embroidered costume, and his face was painted in a hideous fashion, with his nose all white and streaks under his eyes.

After I had kissed half the paint off his face, he told me what had happened.

Daddy had been in San Francisco long enough to get pretty well acquainted with Chinatown. He had kept around there from the first, to escape notice, and he had got to be mighty good friends with one of the actors, who spoke English fairly well. When he was chased by the detective, he had made straight for Moy Kip's room, and asked to hide out. The Chinese are used to fooling the police, and Kip just threw a gown over Daddy's shoulders, painted his face, and put him on the opium-bunk. When the officer went through the actors' rooms, he looked in, but didn't see any more than I saw at first. Then Moy Kip watched me through the little window over the stage, and as soon as the detective left the place they sent for me.

Daddy and I were taken to a room three stories under the sidewalk, where we hid for a week, going upstairs at meal-times to eat rice and suey and roast pigs and ducks in the dining-room with the actors. It was just like one big family of about eighty men, but only one or two women. The little rooms we had were dark and dirty and close, and the smell was something awful. I couldn't have stood it alone, but daddy was safe; that was enough for awhile.

But living Chinese fashion without sunlight or

decent food didn't agree with daddy at all, and he fell sick. It wasn't only the air that was ailing him, it was the fear of capture too; and with all the hardship and worry, his fever got steadily worse. I nursed him as well as I could. A Chinese doctor in big spectacles and a long white moustache came in to see him, and mixed him up some black, horrid smelly stuff made of sea-horses and lizards, and Moy Kip burned punks in the joss-house upstairs; but he didn't get any better. He was always worrying about something when he was delirious, and I couldn't make out quite what it was about till one day just before the end, when his mind cleared, and he told me. Moy Kip wanted to marry me! Daddy didn't know what to do; he couldn't bear to ask me to marry a Chinaman, and he didn't like to refuse the man who had been right kind to him.

You can imagine how I felt about it. It would have been bad enough if Moy Kip had been an ordinary Chinaman, but being an actor, he belonged to almost the lowest caste. Undertakers and barbers and boatmen are the only ones below. Actors can't even mix equally with ordinary coolies. Besides, Kip being the principal 'white-face' actor or comedian, the manager didn't let him leave the theatre much, for fear he'd be kidnapped by high-

binders and held for ransom. If I married him, the life would be something awful.

And now, to make it all worse, my poor old Dodo was taken away. He died in my arms after being sick a week. I was alone in the city, without money or friends except the Chinese actors. I was almost crazy for sunlight and fresh air and the sight of decent people.

Moy Kip was the only one of the crowd of Chinamen in the building who could speak English very well, and he had also been my father's friend. He was educated after a fashion, and, for a Chinaman, kind and gentlemanly. The more I saw of him, the more I liked him, and pretty soon I found there was a heap more of good in Chinamen than I'd ever allowed.

One day, soon after daddy was buried, Kip came to my room. I was crying on the bunk, and he stood there watching me, then placed a roll of gold on the table.

'I give you two hundled dollar,' he said. 'You likee go away home? No good stay here. Chiny actor heap bad.'

I sat up in surprise. I wondered where I would ever find another man who, loving me and having me in his power, would give me the means to escape. Right away I began to like him.

'Oh, Moy Kip,' I said, 'you have been so good to poor daddy!'

He looked at me hard, and said: 'You likee Moy Kip? You mally me, please?'

So, after awhile, I ended by accepting him, and I have never been sorry since. We were married in the Chinese way. I wore a stiff dress of red silk my husband bought for me, and my hair was braided tight and greased, fastened with gold filigree and jade ornaments. I had my cheeks rouged and eyebrows painted and all.

But it was not till the carriage took me from my old rooms, and the slave woman had carried me on her back up the stairs and into Moy Kip's home (so that I should not stumble on the threshold and bring bad luck), that I found out how much difference the marriage was going to make to my husband. For I wasn't taken to the theatre at all, but to a little set of rooms in Spofford Alley. When he came in to meet me, dressed like a prince in his lilac blouse and green trousers, I asked him how it happened he hadn't fitted up a room for me in the theatre.

Seems like he reckoned I had brought him luck, for he had paid the manager for the right to quit acting, and he was going to try and get into more respectable business. In China, of course, he would have had to go on being an actor, and his sons after

him; but Chinatown here is different, and it's getting to lose some of the old strictness. A Chinaman in China worships his grandfathers, you know, but I reckon in San Francisco he's a heap likelier to worship his grandsons, if he's lucky enough to have any, and especially if they wear American clothes.

What Moy Kip was going to do was to smuggle opium. You might think it a queer way of becoming respectable, but it isn't wrong to a Chinaman, for it's only just fooling the white devils out of a little customs. He'd been wanting to go into it for a long time, but he had nobody to help him at it—nobody he could trust, that is. With me to take hold, he reckoned he could make right smart of money.

We bought a naphtha launch, and filled it with nets and truck, like we were fishing, if anybody wanted to inspect us, and Kip had bribed the stewards on about every China steamer coming into port. They bought the stuff in five-tael tins and packed it in bales with lines and floats, dropping it overboard as the ship crossed the bar. Then all we had to do was to cruise around in the launch, and pick up the floats and haul in the bale. It was my part of the business to dispose of the opium after we had got it into town. I sold it to a German, who distributed it through Chinatown. He used to live in China, and had a secret process for making yenshee out of

pipe scrapings that was smoked by poor folks who couldn't afford to pay for real opium. What we sold him he adulterated and thinned in a way of his own, so that you could get a pipe of it for about a quarter what the real stuff cost. He had a big trade, as the Chinamen trusted him more than they did each other; and so, with the duty on opium at fifty per cent., I had no trouble in selling all we could get hold of.

The first year I was perfectly happy with Moy Kip, and no white man could have treated me better than he did. He named me Hak Chu—the 'black pearl' —and nothing was too good for me. But still we didn't count for much in Chinatown, for Moy Kip was still considered an actor, and below the notice of merchants. It seemed to be as much a question of money as anywhere else in the world, and until we could save enough up to buy a share in some store, we were less than nobody, except at the theatre, where they were always glad to see us both. We often went to see the plays, until, with my husband's explanations, I got so I could follow the acting pretty well.

It's right interesting when you begin to understand, for everything in the theatre means something. Moy Kip explained to me how the carved and gilded dragon over the doors leading to the dressing-rooms

meant a waterspout, and the sign beside it read, 'Go out and change costume;' while the bat eating a sun over the other door signified the eclipse, and here the placard meant, 'Enter in good spirits.' Some of the notices were funnier still. Over the orchestra was printed, 'When the performance begins, there will be good luck to all,' and on the sides of the stage were written, 'Go up and down peaceably,' and 'The seats are full of gentlemen.'

They have lots of different kinds of plays, and some of them take weeks to go through, running night after night until all the doings of the hero are finished. But best of all I liked to see the Hong-Koi, or 'chivalry plays,' and the Yuen-Wang, or 'persecution' dramas; for they were plum-full of action and pantomime, and had lots of what they call 'Great Eastern Melons,' or extra people, who make a sort of chorus and don't act much, but wear queer clothes.

One night, while we were sitting on the stage in the theatre watching a new Wae, or painted face comedian, who had been brought from China to take Moy Kip's place, a man came to my husband with a letter. You know, in Chinese theatres they have a special pillar where letters for anybody in the audience can be pinned up, and this one had been seen by someone who knew Kip was there. When my husband read it, I could see that it had bad news.

Chinamen never show much feeling, but I knew him well enough to see something was wrong. He got up right off, and told me we must get home.

When we were safe in our house, he told me what was the matter. The letter was from the president of a highbinder tong that had been watching us for some time. They had discovered that we were making money some way, and now they said that if Moy Kip didn't pay five thousand dollars right off, he would be murdered by their hatchet-men. That was about all the money we had in the world, and they most likely knew it. Oh, I was scared! I tried to make my husband promise to pay the hush-money, but he just wouldn't do it. He said he might as well die as be robbed of all he had earned at so much risk. He said he wasn't afraid; but if he wasn't, I was. If he had only belonged to a regular tong of his own, he might have been protected; but being an actor, and yet not one, there was no company he could join, and no one to revenge him if he were killed.

From this time on I had the horrors every time he left me. While we were together on our trips on the launch, I didn't care so much, for the excitement kept up my spirits; but as soon as I was left alone, I burned punks in front of his little joss, just like I was a heathen myself.

All went on so quiet that I had begun to feel easier, when yesterday the *City of Pekin* was reported. It was after dark before we got out to our wharf and put off, and we passed the steamer at the Quarantine station. It was cold and foggy, and we spent hours cruising out at the mouth of the harbour in a rough swell before we picked up the opium and steamed back to Hunter's Point.

As we stopped the engines and shot up to the pier, I was steering in the stern, and Moy Kip was at the engine. Just then I saw two men rise up from behind a pile on the dock. I screamed to my husband to reverse the engine and back off at full speed, and he had just done it when the highbinders jumped into the boat. The shock nearly rolled her over, and I fell down on my face. Before I could get up, I saw the hatchet-men strike at Moy Kip two or three times. I drew my pistol and fired, but the launch was rolling, so I reckon I missed them. They jumped into the water, and swam off. Then I called out to Moy Kip, and ran forward to help him.

My husband didn't answer. I stooped down to him and turned him over. Oh, it was horrible! And then I must have swooned away, for it's the last thing I remember.

Moy Kip has been murdered, and his blood cries to me for vengeance. That's all there is left to me

in this life, to hunt down the fiends that killed him, and put them out of the world. And I'll do it too. I've been tracked and hunted myself, and now I'll track and hunt in my turn.

I know the ways of these hired hatchet-men. They've been sold out time after time by their own members, and so now, when they go out for a murder, they write down a confession with both names signed on the same paper. Then they tear it up and divide the pieces, each one having the other's name to hold him by if his partner tries to sell him out. Wong Yet's confession is on this paper you found. He'll die to-night; murderers can be bought cheap in Chinatown. Now, if I only had the other half of the paper, I'd know who the other man was, and settle him too.

By this time the dilapidated laundry-waggon had threaded the Mission, crossed Market Street, and was rolling along the asphalt of Golden Gate Avenue on its way to the Chinese quarter. The quadroon woman's eyes were afire with hate, and Vango watched her in apprehension, mingled with a shrewd desire to work further upon her excitement.

'You see, I was able to be of assistance, even when conditions was unfavourable,' he ventured. 'The spirits is unfalliable when a party approaches

'em right. If I could give you a regular sittin', and get into perfect harmony with the vibrations of my control's magnetism, I ain't no doubt I could lead you to find the balance of that there paper.'

The wheel of the waggon caught in the street-car rail, and the medium was jerked almost off his seat ; or so an observer might have explained the sudden lurch and the way Vango's face went white. But his imagination or mania, kindled again by the craft of his trickery, had conjured up the vision of his previous dupe, and Mrs. Higgins' spirit arose before him in threatening attitude. He cowered and stared, exorcising the phantom, rubbing his hands in terror.

But the quadroon woman did not notice. Her mind, too, was full of horrors, and the desire for vengeance was an obsession. She only replied, as she whipped up the bony nag that drew them :

' One thousand dollars if you find that piece of paper before night !'

CHAPTER XI

THE BIOGRAPH THEATRE

'TEN cents!' Admeh Drake muttered to himself as he felt the first shock of the cool breeze on Kearney Street. 'What in Jericho can a man do with a dime, anyway? It won't even buy a decent bed; it won't pay the price of a drink at the Hoffman Bar. Coffee John is full of prunes!'

He walked up the cheap side of the street, looking aimlessly at the shop-windows.

'I figure it out about this way,' he thought. 'I ain't going to earn a million with two nickels; if I make a raise, it'll be just by durn luck. So it don't matter how I begin, nor what I do at all. I just got to go it blind, and trust to striking a trail that'll lead to water. I'll take up with the first idea I get, and ride for it as far as it goes.'

With this decision he gave up the unnecessary strain of thought, and floated with the human current, letting it carry him where it would. Now

the main Gulf Stream of San Francisco life sets down Kearney and up Market Street; this is the Rialto, the promenade of cheap actors, rounders, and men about town. It is the route of the amatory ogler, and the grand tour of the demi-monde. Of a Saturday afternoon the course is given over to human peacocks and popinjays fresh from the matinées, airing the 'latest' in garb and finery; but there is a late guard abroad after the theatres close in the evening, when the relieving prospect of an idle morrow gives a merry license for late hours and convivial comradeship. Amongst these raglans and opera-cloaks Admeh's rusty-brown jacket was carried along like an empty bottle floating down stream.

He turned into Market Street at Lotta's Fountain, and had drifted a block northerly, when the brilliant letters of an electric sign across the way caught his eye: 'Biograph Theatre. Admittance, 10 cents.' The hint was patent and alluring; there seemed to be no gainsaying such a tip from Fate. Over he went with never a thought as to where he would spend the night without money, and in two minutes Coffee John's dime slid under the window of the little ticket-office in front. 'Hurry up!' said the man in the box, 'the performance is just about to begin.'

Admeh made his way upstairs, passed through a corridor lined with a cheap and unnecessary display of dried fishes in a long glass case, and came to the entrance of a dingy hall dimly illuminated. At the far end of the sloping floor was a Liliputian stage. A scant score of spectators were huddled together on the front seats, and here Admeh took his place between two soldiers in khaki uniform and a fat negress.

As he sat down the curtain rose, and two comedians entered to go through a dreary speciality turn of the coarsest 'knock-about' description. Admeh yawned. Even the negress was bored, and the two infantry corporals sneered openly. Next came a plump lady of uncertain age, who carolled a popular song and did a frisky side-step to the chorus.

Admeh was gloomily disappointed. He turned his head to inspect the audience more closely, hoping for some livelier prompting of his destiny, when, with a trill and a one-two-three accompaniment upon the wheezy piano at the side of the stage, a little soubrette ran down to the footlights, and with a mighty fetching seriousness, rolling her eyes to the ceiling, proclaimed: 'Ladies and gentlemen, with your kind permission I will now endeavour to entertain you with a few tricks of sleight-of-hand.'

She was a wee thing, with wistful brown eyes under

a curly blonde wig, and seemingly a mere child. Her costume was a painful combination of blue and violet, home-made beyond a doubt. No one could help looking a guy in such a dress, but Maxie Morrow, as the placard on the proscenium announced her, had a childish ingenuousness that forfended criticism.

As she went through her foolish little performance, audibly coached by someone in the wings, Admeh's eyes followed her with eager interest. He wondered how much older she was than she looked, and what she would be like off the stage. She had a piquant rather than a pretty face, in form that feline triangle depicted by Sir Joshua Reynolds. In her movements she was as graceful and as swiftly accurate as a kitten, and she had all a kitten's endearing and alluring charm.

Admeh made a sudden resolve. If he were to meet with an adventure that night, what could possibly be more entertaining than to have for his heroine this little puss of a magician? He made a rapid study of the situation to discover its possibilities. It took but a few minutes for his wishes to work out a plan of action, and he was soon at the door, urbanely addressing the ticket-taker.

'See here,' said Admeh, 'I'm a reporter on the *Wave*—you know the paper, weekly illustrated—

and I want an interview with Miss Morrow. I'll give her a good write-up if you'll let me go behind and talk to her.'

The Biograph Theatre did not often figure in the dramatic columns of the city papers, and such a free advertisement was not to be refused. The door-keeper became on the instant effusively polite, and, bustling with importance, took the young man down a side aisle to a door, and up three stairs through a passage leading behind the wings. Admeh was shown into a tiny dressing-room, whose scrawled plaster-walls were half covered with skirts, waists, and properties of all kinds. The little magician was in front of her make-up table dabbing at the rouge-pot. The door-keeper introduced the visitor, then discreetly withdrew, closing the door after him.

At her discovery by this audacious representative of the press, Maxie was all smiles and blushes. She was still but little more than a girl, although not quite so young as she had appeared in front of the footlights, and more naïve and embarrassed than one would have expected of such a determined little actress. She offered Admeh her own chair, the only one in the room, but he seated himself upon a trunk and began the conversation.

All his tact was necessary to put her at her ease

and induce her to talk. The Hero of Pago Bridge was by no means too ready with his tongue, usually, in the presence of women, but there was something in the touching admiration she betrayed for him as a newspaper man that prevented him from being bashful. He thought the brotherly attitude to be the proper pose under the circumstances, and he led her on, talking of the theatre, the weather, her costume, and himself, while she sat awkwardly conscious of her tights, which she slapped nervously with a little whip. His careless, friendly way at last gave her confidence, for he asked her few questions, and did not seem to expect clever replies. Before long she had thrown off all reserve, and chattered freely to him.

The Biograph Theatre kept open, as a rule, as long as it could secure patronage. This night stragglers kept coming in, so that the four ' artistes ' and the picture-machine in the room below still went through their weary routine. As the conversation proceeded Maxie left at times, went through her act, and returned, finding Admeh always ready to put her upon the thread of her story.

So by bits and snatches, by repetitions and parentheses, in an incident here and a confession there, this is about the way Admeh Drake heard that night in Maxie Morrow's dressing-room

The Story of the Minor Celebrity.

I can't really remember when I wasn't acting, and I have no idea who my parents were, or where I was born, or when, or anything. I think, though, I must be about nineteen years old, though I don't look it, and I have decided on the first of July for my birthday, because that's just the middle of the year, and it can't possibly be more than six months wrong. I used to go on in child's parts in London when I couldn't have been more than four.

Then, the next thing I remember, I was with a company of Swiss bell-ringers, and we travelled all through the English provinces. I used to sing and dance in between their turns, and I tell you it was hard work, practising all day and dancing all night almost. We were all fearfully poor, for we weren't very much of an attraction. I had only one frock besides my stage costume, and that one was so patched I was ashamed to go to the pork-shop even with it on. I was a regular little slave to old Max, who ran the company, and had to help cook and wash the dishes in the lodgings we took in the little towns. Bah! I hate the smell of brown Windsor soap to this day. I was just a little wild animal, for I never went to school a day in my life, and I was never allowed to go on errands alone

even, unless they kept account of the exact time it would take to go and come, and they held me to account for every minute. I hardly think I ever talked to a child till I was grown up.

Well, the business fell off in England, so we took passage in a sailing-ship for California, around the Horn. That voyage was the happiest time of my life, for I had nothing to do but practise my steps one or two hours a day, when the sea was calm enough. There was a very nice old lady aboard who taught me how to sew, and gave me some flannel to make myself some underwear, for I had never worn anything but what showed before, and I didn't even know that anyone else ever did. She taught me to read too, and tried to help me with arithmetic, but mercy! I never could get figures into my head.

Well, we got to San Francisco finally—that was about ten years ago. Bell-ringing didn't seem to take very well—it was out of date, or other people did it better, because you know speciality people have to keep improving their act, and play on their heads, or while they're tumbling through the air, or some novelty, nowadays, or it doesn't go, and it's hard to get booked. But my act drew well, and it always saved our turn. I made up new steps all the time, and invented pretty costumes, and so, of course, old Max watched me like grim death to see

that I didn't get away from him. We travelled all over the West, and all the time I was a drudge, did most of the work, and got none of the money. They used to lock me into the house when they went out, and old Max's wife would give me so much work to do that she'd know whether I'd been idle a moment. You wouldn't think a girl in a fix like that had much chance to get married, would you ?

Well, I am married, or rather I was. I don't know just how I stand now. Let me tell you about it.

There was a man used to hang about the Star Variety Theatre in Los Angelos, who did small parts sometimes, when they wanted a policeman in a sketch, or things like that, but he mostly helped with the scene-shifters. I never had more than a few words with him, but he kind of took a fancy to me, and he used to bring me candy, and leave it behind the flats where the others wouldn't see it. I don't believe now he ever cared so very much for me; but I was silly, and had never had any attention, and I thought he was in love with me, and I imagined I was with him. He tried to make up to Max, but the old man wouldn't have anything to do with him.

One day when all my people were out, and had locked me in the house with a lot of dishes to wash,

Harry—his name was Harry Maidslow—came down the street and saw me at the kitchen window. I raised the sash when he came into the yard, and without waiting for much talk first, for we were both afraid the old man would be coming back and would catch us, Harry asked me if I didn't want to leave the show, and if I wouldn't run away with him.

I believe I told him I'd run away with an orang-outang if I got the chance. Remember, I was only seventeen, and I had never been alone with a man in my life before. In my life—if you call such slavery as that living! So he told me not to appear to notice him, but to be all ready for him, and to watch out, and when I heard a certain whistle he taught me, wherever I was to jump and run for him, and he'd do the rest.

You can imagine if I wasn't excited for the next few days! I would have jumped off the roof to get to him if necessary, and I just waited from hour to hour, expecting to hear his call every minute. I didn't hardly dare to go to sleep at night for fear I'd miss him, and I was listening everywhere I went, meals and all. I think I trembled for three days. It seemed impossible that he'd be able to get me away—it was too good to come true. But I had nothing else in the world to look forward to, and I

hoped and prayed for that whistle with all my might.

One night at the theatre, after my company had done the first part of their bell-ringing, I went on for my song. I remember it was that purple silk frock I wore, the one with the gold fringe and red stockings with bows at the knees. Well, the orchestra had just struck up my air,

> 'Ain't I the cheese? Ain't I the cheese?
> Dancing the serpentine under the trees!'

and I was just ready to catch the first note, when I heard that whistle so loud and clear I couldn't mistake it. Heavens! I can almost hear it now. I was half frightened to death, but I just shut my eyes, and jumped clean over the footlights and landed in the flageolet's lap, and then pelted right up the middle aisle. Harry had a lot of his friends ready by the main entrance, and they rushed down to meet me, and while half of them held the ushers and the crowd back, for everyone was getting up to see what was the matter, like a panic, the rest of the boys took me by the elbows and ran me out the front-door. The house was simply packed that night, and when they all saw me jump they set up a yell like the place was afire. But I didn't hear it at all till I got out in the corridor with my skirt

half torn off and my dancing clogs gone, and then the noise sounded like a lion roaring in a menagerie.

Harry was all ready waiting for me, and he took me right up in his arms, as if I was a doll, and ran down the stairs, put me in a carriage waiting at the door, and we drove off lickety-split.

I've often thought since then that I took a big risk in trusting a man I didn't really know at all; but Harry was square, and took me right down to a justice of the peace. We were married just as I stood, with no slippers, and the holes in the heels of my stockings showing. What old Max did I don't know, but he must have been a picture for the audience when he saw me fly away like a bird out of a cage. By the time he found out what had happened it was too late to do anything about it, for I was Mrs. Maidslow.

Well, I lived with Harry for a few months, and then he began to drink, and wanted me to go on the stage again to support him. The first time he struck me I ran away and came up to San Francisco, and went into speciality work for myself. Harry was kind enough when he was sober; in fact, he was too good-natured to refuse even a drink—that was just what was the matter. He had no backbone, and although he had a sort of a romantic way

with him that women like, he didn't have the nerve to stay with anything very long.

Now the funny part of the whole thing is this. You'd think that old Max would have been furious, and so he was at first; but afterward he had a terrible falling-out with the others in his company; his wife had died, and I guess he wanted to spite them more than he did me. At any rate, just before he died, a year ago, he inherited some money from an uncle in Germany, and what did he do but leave a kind of a legacy to Harry. That is, the old man had a funny idea that wills didn't hold very well in this country, and he had a great respect for the honour of the army officers. So he left $15,000 in cash with a Colonel Knowlton in trust for Harry Maidslow when he could be found. Harry had a way of changing his name when he felt like it, and old Max didn't know him very well, anyway, so the only way he could be sure of Colonel Knowlton's identifying him was by—well, by a certain mark he had on his body that Max happened to know about. The Colonel has been invalided home from the Philippines, and every time he sees me he asks me if I've found Harry.

So that's all. I don't really know whether I'm a wife or a widow, but I do know that I ought to have a share of that money coming to me, and perhaps,

if you put the story into the papers, some of his friends will see it and give me news of him.

Admeh Drake put his pencil into his pocket, feeling a sense of shame at his duplicity with this little waif. He would have been glad to help her, but it seemed useless to disappoint her credulity by confessing that his relations with the press were entirely fictitious.

'Well, I hope you get the money,' he said, 'and if there's anything I can do to help you, I will. But don't you want me to see you home, Maxie?'

'Sure!' said the girl frankly, and after pulling on a rather soiled automobile coat and adjusting a top-heavy plumed black hat, she descended the stairs of the theatre with Admeh, and they found themselves on Market Street.

'It's a little late to get anything to eat,' Admeh suggested tentatively, trusting to his luck. He was not disappointed.

'Oh yes, indeed,' replied the girl. 'I always have supper after I get home, anyway.'

Half the worry was off his mind, but without a cent in his pocket, the question of transportation troubled him. If worst came to worst, Admeh decided that he would take Maxie home in a carriage, see her safely indoors, and then return and have it

out with the driver. But first he ventured another insinuation. 'It's a beautiful night!' he remarked. At that moment the fog enveloped the upper half of the Spreckels building, and the tall and narrow column was visible only by an irregular pattern of soft, blurred yellow lights.

'Fine!' said Maxie; 'let's walk.'

She took his arm blithely, happy at her release from work, and they crossed over, went up Grant Avenue to Post Street, and there turned towards Union Square. A short distance ahead of them a tall man in a gray mackintosh was walking with somewhat painful carefulness up the street. His divagations seemed to testify to a rather jovial evening's indulgence. The two rapidly approached him, and Admeh had scarcely time to notice his yellow beard and hair, when the stranger turned into a doorway. The house he entered was gaudily painted in red and yellow with stars and crescents, and so fiercely lighted with electric lamps that no wayfarer, however dazed, could fail to notice the sign: 'Hammam Baths—Gentlemen's Entrance.' When Admeh turned to Maxie she was as pale as if she had seen a ghost. She looked up at him with a glitter in her eyes.

'Here!' she exclaimed, opening her purse and thrusting a dollar into his hand, 'go in there and

see if that man who just went in has the word "Dotty" tattooed on his right arm! Find out who he is, and come to the theatre to-morrow and tell me.' With that she pushed him into the doorway and was gone.

CHAPTER XII

THE MYSTERY OF THE HAMMAM BATHS

With the enthusiasm of an amateur detective, Admeh Drake paid his dollar for admission, and passed through two anterooms into an artificially tropical atmosphere. Turkish baths were a luxury outside of his scheme of things; he knew nothing of the arrangements. He paused, uncertain how to proceed—uncertain, too, as to the best plan for catching the yellow-bearded man stripped. While he hesitated, an attendant showed him into a dressing-room upstairs. He saw men passing with towels twisted about their loins.

For the first time in many days he took off his wrinkled, creased clothes. Pausing on the balcony outside the door, he surveyed the carpeted, gaudily-decorated apartment below. It was midnight, the busiest hour of the twenty-four in the baths. Heavier than the atmosphere of steam and steamed humanity rose the fumes of liquor. Few there are sober in a

Hammam at that elbow of the night. Not knowing that the sweating heat takes the edge and fervour from the wildest intoxication, Admeh wondered, as he watched, at the subdued murmur of their babblings. His eye ranged over a group sitting up in towel robes chatting drowsily, over a drunken satyr thrusting his heavy limbs from under the covers, singing a sleepy tune, over two others sunk in stupor. In that bower of transformation, where all men stood equal as at the judgment, their worldly goods shrunk to a single bath-towel, he found it hard to pick his man; yet no one could he see with the clay-yellow hair and beard that marked the mysterious person for whom he was searching.

Following others who slipped down the stairs in the single, levelling garment, Admeh went across the main salon, through a double glass door, and into an ante-chamber considerably hotter, where men were lolling back, wet and shiny, in canvas chairs. He saw the rubbers working in the room beyond, saw that the men under their hands were black and brown of hair and beard.

To the right another glass door caught his eye. He passed in, and gasped at the heavy, overpowering temperature. His glasses, to which he had hung with the instinct of a near-sighted man, burned on his nose. Men, gasping and

dripping, sat all along the wall, their feet in little tubs of water.

In the corner sat the mysterious stranger of the yellow hair and beard. He was singing sentimentally. Admeh, practised in the lore of intoxication, sat watching. 'The jag's growing,' he said to himself. In fact, the fumes of liquor, heat-driven, were mounting steadily. Crossing the room so as to command the stranger's right side, he saw round his upper arm a black rubber bandage, like those used to confine varicose veins. The problem resolved itself into a question of tearing off that bandage.

'Hotter'n the hazes of the Philippines!' babbled the man with the yellow beard.

Piecing together the description of her husband given by Maxie in the story of her adventures, Admeh was more than ever persuaded that this was the object of his search—that under the elastic bandage was the mark of identification by which he was to know the legatee of the fortune left by the old bellringer.

The man of the yellow beard sang maudlin Orpheum songs, and prattled of many things. He cursed San Francisco; he told of his amours; he offered to fight or wrestle anyone in the room. 'A chance,' thought Admeh, as he took the challenge; but in a moment more the drunken man was running

again on the love-tack, with the winds of imagination blowing free. Nevertheless, this challenge gave Admeh an idea. What he could not encompass by diplomacy he might seize by force. In that method all must depend upon the issue of a moment. If he could tear away the bandage in the first rally, he would win; but let the struggle last more than a moment, and others would intervene; then he would be thrown out, and the chance would be gone. Mentally, he measured bodies against the stranger, man for man, and saw that, both being sober, he himself was badly overmatched. Broader and taller by many inches, the stranger was of thick, knotty limbs and deep chest; Admeh himself was all cowboy nerve and wire, but slight and out of condition. It was bull against coyote.

'The question is,' thought Admeh, 'can I and his jag lick him and his muscle?'

The stranger, singing again, lurched along the hot tiling to another room. Admeh gasped like a hooked trout as he followed through the door. It was the extra-hot room, where the mercury registered one hundred and sixty degrees. The stranger's bristles began to subside, and his lids crept together. The amateur detective drew nearer, and, languid as he was with the terrific heat, gathered his forces for the attempt. At that moment an attendant with trays

of ice-water slouched in on his felt shoes. Admeh slipped back into his chair.

This entrance had a most surprising effect on him of the yellow beard. Some emotion, which Admeh took to be either fear or anxiety, struggled to break through the veil of his debauch; he stared with bleary but intent eyes. In a moment he was lurching for the door. Glad of the relief from that overwhelming heat, Admeh followed. The trail led through the ante-room, past the rubbers and their benches, through another double glass door. A rush of steam fogged his spectacles; when it cleared a little, he saw dimly, through the hot vapour, that he was in a long, narrow closet, banked on one side by benches and by pipes which were vomiting clouds of steam. Groping from one side to the other, he found that they were quite alone.

With no further hesitation Admeh rushed on his man, and grasped for the right arm. By the fraction of an inch he missed his hold. The stranger, with a quickness amazing for one in his condition—and, what was more surprising, without a word—lashed out, and caught Admeh a blow on the chest which whirled him back on the hot benches, and fairly jerked his spectacles from his nose. The issue was on, and it was first honours for the stranger. Unsteady on his legs, but still deter-

mined, Admeh closed again, ducked under a ponderous blow, and grappled round the waist. He managed to get one hand on the bandage, but in no wise could he tear it away, for the stranger held him in a bear-grip, tight about the neck. So they struggled and grunted and swayed through the misty clouds from the hot benches to the slippery floor, and back to the benches again. Their bodies, with the exertion and the steam, ran rivulets; their throats were gasping. Once, twice, they staggered the room's length. Admeh was beginning to feel his breath and his senses going together, when the grasp about his neck slackened in tension.

'I and the jag win,' he thought with what sense was left in him. He gathered his strength into its last cartridge, gave a heave and a fling; they went down to the floor with a wet slap, Admeh above. He felt his opponent collapse under him. For a moment he, too, saw the universe swing round him, but with a great effort he tore away the bandage and pressed his near-sighted eyes close to the right arm.

There was a tattooed design on the white skin. Admeh made out the word 'Dotty' framed in a border of twisted snakes. His quest was done. Faint, weary, languid, he prepared to get away before his assault was discovered. The door opened; someone caught Admeh by the arm. With

no more fight in him, he raised himself to one knee, and recognised the attendant, the sight of whom had so nearly sobered his drunken opponent.

'What the devil——' said the newcomer, and stopped as his eye caught that mark on the arm. Then he bent down, passed his finger over the mark, studied it, and peered into the white, senseless face behind the yellow beard.

'My work! it is the very man!' he exclaimed in tones of the greatest interest. Turning to Admeh, he asked: 'Now, why did *you* want to know about that mark? And what were *you* scrapping for?'

'What do you know about him?' retorted Admeh.

'Story for story,' said the attendant.

'Story for story, swapped sight unseen,' agreed Admeh. 'But let's get him out of here first, because he's in a pretty bad fix between his fight and his jag.'

Together they carried him to a dressing-room, laid him on a bed, closed the curtain. Here Admeh's last spark of strength left him; he collapsed in a heap on the floor. With practised hands the attendant set about reviving them both. In ten minutes the man of mystery slept heavily, stupidly, on the bench, and Admeh was sitting against the wall breathing cool relief from the outer air. Briefly he

told of his singular errand, omitting, from some hazy idea of policy, the item about the legacy.

'Well,' said the rubber, after Admeh Drake had finished his tale, 'your yarn certainly is curious, but I can beat it. What d'you think of this? I tattooed that name and mark on this fellow's arm, and I know the history of it; but he has no idea to this day how it ever come there, nor who "Dotty" is, nor why I did it, nor anything at all about it. He was the hero of as queer a melodrama as ever I heard, and he knew no more about it all the time than a babe unborn!'

He rang an electric bell; a boy answered.

'Tell the boss to send for the extra man,' he said; 'I'm done up for to-night, and I'm going to lay off for awhile.'

So saying, he took Drake into an adjoining room shared by the employés of the baths, and after making himself comfortable on a lounge with a blanket wrapper, he told the following joyous romance:

The Story of the Dermograph Artist.

You see, this ain't my regular job. I'm working here because my profession is played out in San Francisco; I'm a dermograph artist. What's that?

Oh, it's what most people call a tattooer. Don't you think we've got as much right to be called artist as the fellows that slap paint on cloth with a brush ? I think so. Is anything nicer than the human skin ? Don't you fix up your walls and your ceilings and your floors that you wipe your feet on ? Then, what's the matter with decorating yourself ? That's the line of talk I always gave people when they asked me why I called myself a dermograph artist.

It was the electric needle and the Jap tattooer that ran me out of business. With the electric needle a man could put on a design in about a quarter of the time that it takes to do a real, artistic job by hand. The blamed Jap would pretty near pay to get a customer, he worked that cheap. I quit, and I never get out my needles now except for a design on someone in the baths.

My parlours were on the water-front, because most of my customers were sailors. Of course, once in a while some swells from Nob Hill would come in for a design or two. I used to do my best work for them, because, I thought, you never can tell when these society people will get next to the fact that a picture on the skin has it a mile on a painting. Why, the other day I read in the papers that a Frenchman got a hundred thousand dollars for a little dinky canvas painting. The highest pay I ever knew a

dermograph artist to get was five hundred, for doing the Wells Brothers' tattooed woman. Do you call that square ?

After the Jap and the electric-needle chump came to town, business fell off, as I was telling you. They'd have made me close up my shop and get out if it hadn't been for Spotty Crigg. Ever hear of him ? Well, you sure haven't been in San Francisco long. In those days he kept a sailor boarding-house and saloon round the corner from my parlours, and he was sort of boss of the water-front, good any time to deliver five hundred votes. I ain't saying that Spotty was a Sunday-school kind of man, but he stuck to his friends. I was one of the gang, so he sent me enough jobs to keep me going. Besides, I helped him once or twice on a shanghai-ing deal. You see, like most sailor boarding-house keepers in those days, he was a crimp—used to deliver a sailor or two when foremast hands were scarce and the pay was good. Spotty Crigg is dead now, or I wouldn't be telling you about his last and biggest shanghai-ing scrape. I didn't understand it at the time, but I learned about it afterwards, part from Crigg and part from people on the other side of the little deal.

One of my society customers was young Tom Letterblair. Maybe you don't know about him either ; he belonged to about the richest tribe of

swells on Nob Hill. That fellow was as wild as a fish-hawk, a thoroughbred, dead game sport. His being wild didn't bother his people so much as the way he went about it—always doing something crazy. His people were strong on getting into the society columns, but he was eternally getting the family name on the front pages of the yellow journals. He wasn't really what you would call bad either, only wild and careless and brought up wrong, and stubborn about it when anyone tried to call him down. He'd never seem sorry if he got the family into trouble, but just laugh at his sisters when they roasted him. And instead of treating him quiet and easy and gentling him into being good, they'd jaw him. That's a bad scheme with a gilded youth like Tom Letterblair. They were a bunch of orphans; that was half the trouble.

Finally, Tom Letterblair took up with a chorus-girl, and refused to drop her. The family tried to buy her off. Now, she wasn't a nice sort of girl, but she was true to Tom. She told him about it. For once, although he was such a careless fellow, he got mad, and what does he do but come to me to have her name 'Dotty' tattooed on his arm with the double-snake border. Says he to me confidentially, 'That's the girl I'm going to marry when I come of age, which is only two months, and don't you forget

it.' Seems that he told other people the same thing, so that it came back to his family.

Now, his sisters and the Eastern society swells that they were married to didn't hanker any to have Dotty for a sister-in-law. But they knew by experience that if Tom Letterblair said he'd do it, all blazes wouldn't hold him. J. Thrasher Sunderland, one of Tom's brothers-in-law, had what he thought was a bright idea ; it was to get the kid shanghaied on a sailing vessel off for a six months' voyage.

That wasn't such a bad scheme, either. They could keep him away from Dotty and drink for six months, have him work hard, and make a man out of him. It's been done before, right in this port. That wild streak is a kind of disease that strikes young fellows with too much blood in their necks and money in their pockets. I know. I've had it myself, bar the money. By six months what doctors call the crisis would have been over. The risky thing was the chance of his raising a howl when he got back, but they were willing to take chances that the sense knocked into him with a belaying-pin would make him see it their way. They were going to give it out to the papers and their friends that he was off for his health.

J. Thrasher Sunderland made his first break when he went to Captain Wynch, of the barque *Treasure*

Trove, instead of going straight to a crimp, as he ought to have done. Wynch promised to treat the kid well, and try to brace him up. Never having seen Tom Letterblair, he got a description of him, including the tattoo-mark. Then the skipper went to Spotty Crigg, and promised him a hundred dollars for doing the rough work of getting Tom on board the vessel.

Letterblair was such a big, careless fellow he never suspected anything, and a lure note fetched him to Crigg's saloon the night before the barque cleared. Tom had been drinking hard that day—showed up badly slewed. 'Twas a jolly drunk, and he was ready for a glass with anyone.

Now, Crigg hadn't given much thought to this little transaction, for he was doing that sort of work almost every day in the week ; but when that young swell, all dressed up to the nines, came into the Bowsprit saloon, the looks of him put a brand-new idea into Spotty's noddle. It struck him that a hundred dollars was pretty small pay for catching a fish of that size and colour ; there was evidently a big deal on somewhere. Like everyone else that read the papers, he knew considerable about Tom Letterblair—knew him for a young sport, free as water with his money. Putting two and two together, he saw that if he could save the kid instead of

stealing him, there might be a good many times a hundred in the affair. Besides, there was a chance of finding out who was trying to get the shanghai-ing done, and then collecting blackmail. So he decided to play both ends; he would steal the wrong man and hold on to the right one.

He ran his eye round the place, and saw Harry Maidslow, a scene-shifter in the old Baldwin Theatre, who used to drop in now and then on his nights off. Man for man, Maidslow and Letterblair were modelled on the same lines. Maidslow had a moustache, but that would come off easy enough, yellow hair, blue eyes, big and strong build. Maidslow hadn't a relative this side of the Rockies; no one would miss him—Crigg knew that.

Spotty Crigg went so far in his mind before he thought of the tattoo mark. Captain Wynch had mentioned it as the proof that there was no mistake. And then Crigg thought of me. I suppose lots of people would have stopped there, but Spotty Crigg had nerve—I'll say that for him—nerve of a thousand.

He didn't risk using knock-out drops, seeing that a drugged man mightn't be grateful, when he woke up, to the one that doctored his booze. He just worked Letterblair to drink himself to sleep. Crigg had him packed upstairs and put to bed, dead to the

world. The next move was easy. Crigg took Harry Maidslow into his office, fed him knock-out drops, carried him up into the same room with Letterblair. Side by side he laid them both, and stripped them to the undershirts.

That was the way I found them when a hurry call brought me to the boarding-house. I thought at first they were both dead and laid out. It gave me the horrors to hear Crigg tell me that I was to copy that tattoo mark; 'twas like working on a dead man. One drunk, the other drugged, lying on a little cheap old bed; and Spotty, who wasn't a nice, clean-looking sort of person anyway, leaning over them with a candle.

When he told what he wanted, I kicked until he put on the screws. He could drive me off the water-front if he cared. I knew that, and he reminded me of it, besides offering me fifty dollars. So at last I went at it, he telling me all the time to hurry. I never worked so fast in my life. By two hours you couldn't tell one mark from the other, except that Maidslow's was new and Letterblair's old. Next we shaved off Maidslow's moustache—for Tom always wore a smooth face—changed their clothes, putting the swell rig on Maidslow and the old clothes on Letterblair.

Next, Spotty Crigg took Maidslow, got him into a

hack, drove him to a dory he had waiting, and rowed out to the *Treasure Trove*, which was in the stream waiting to sail next morning. Captain Wynch was cussing purple because Spotty Crigg had been so long. He went over the description, though, and looked at the right arm to make sure, just as Crigg expected him to do. It looked all right, because a tattoo mark don't begin to swell until the day after ; besides, Wynch was seeing it under a forecastle lamp.

It was all right so far ; but Crigg, who wasn't so keen by a jugful as he thought he was, hadn't figured on one thing. The Letterblairs had an aunt, Mrs. Burden, a widow without chick or child of her own. She was an old, religious lady, with oodles of money and a whopping temper—a regular holy terror. She didn't cotton to the sisters at all—in fact, hated them—but she was soft over Tom Letterblair. Whenever she wasn't turning loose her money stringing hospitals and churches all the way to Sacramento, she was handing it over to the kid, who had only an allowance until he got to be twenty-one. He and the parsons were the only ones who could get her to loosen up. She had no son, and I rather guess that on the quiet she had a sneaking liking for the way he was carrying on. Sort of thrilled her ; you know how some of these pious old girls like a man

that's real bad. She coddled him to death, and fought the sisters for being hard on the boy.

Spotty's luck turned so that she picked the very next morning for a show-down with the sisters over the way they were treating the kid. There must have been a regular hair-pulling. Anyway, before they got through, Mrs. Sunderland was so mad that she poured out the whole scheme in one mouthful. She said:

'You won't have a chance to coddle him any more. He's on the *Treasure Trove*, bound for China, to get the foolishness taken out of him. He's passed the Farralones by this time.'

The old lady was foxy; she would have made a pretty good sport herself. She shut up like a clam, went home, rushed for the telephone, and called up the wharfinger. She found that the *Treasure Trove* was in the stream being towed for the heads, and belonged to Burke & Coleman, this port. She knew Burke. She got her carriage, made his office in two jumps, and wouldn't leave until she had an order on Captain Wynch to deliver a sailor answering Letterblair's description, tattooing and all. In a half-hour more she had a tug started, chasing the *Treasure Trove* with that order. She offered the crew two hundred dollars over regular pay if they got their man back safe and sound. She herself was afraid

of the water, and stayed in the tug-office to wait.

While this was going on, Tom Letterblair woke up at the lodging-house. The man watching him tried to get him drunk again, and the jag turned out loud and nasty. Crigg saw he'd have to be doing something right off the bat.

He knew a little how the land lay between Tom and his people, but not enough. He was sure that some one of Tom's relatives had done it; as far as that he was right. He struck the wrong lead when he picked Mrs. Burden as the one thinking that she, being a church-member, was most likely to be ashamed of the kid. He looked up her number in the directory, and made for the house hot-foot. She wasn't in, so he held up a lamp-post waiting.

The tug got back. They packed Harry Maidslow into the dock-house. He was still sound asleep from the knock-out drops.

'My precious boy!' said the old lady, and fell on his neck. Then she screamed so you could hear her all over the water-front, and began to jump on the captain. She said:

'You're a pack of thieves; you've murdered my Tom and dressed another man in his clothes. Where is my boy? Give me back my boy!' she said, and a lot of other things.

Said the tug-boat captain : ' You're trying to get out of paying the two hundred. He's on specifications, and a nice time we had making them pass him over. Look here!' He got the coat off Harry Maidslow ; there was the tattoo mark just beginning to swell up.

' It's a new mark. You and those hussies have fooled me,' said the old lady. ' I'll have you all in gaol for this,' she said. ' I wish I could find him ; I'd show them ! I'd take him right up to the big dance they're going to have to-night. I'd shame them !' she said. And she drove home, laughing and crying out loud. At the doorstep Spotty Crigg braced her.

He began quiet and easy, working up her curiosity, so that she would let him know how the land lay. That's just where he went wrong again. In about a minute she put two and two together, and saw pretty clearly through the whole scheme. She was just one point smarter than Spotty, and she wormed it out of him finally. He thought she wanted Tom put out of the way, sure. She played her hand by letting him think so. It was move and your turn, like a game of checkers, with the old lady one jump ahead. Said Spotty :

' Two thousand dollars, or I bring him back and give the story to the *Observer* '—which, of course, was exactly what she wanted.

She pretended to be scared, but mad.

'Not a cent. Do your worst,' she said.

'Then I'll go that one better,' said Spotty. 'I see by the papers there's a dance at the Sunderland house to-night. Three thousand down, or I dump him in the front-door drunk as a lord, and dressed like a stevedore. I've got him where you can't find him'—which was a bluff. 'If you tell the police, he'll get worse than a drunk'—which was another.

'Not a red cent,' she said.

'Settles it!' said Crigg. He went away red-hot, mad enough to back up his bluff, just as the old lady thought he would.

When he got home, he found Tom couldn't be kept much longer. There had been a devil of an awful rough-house. That clinched the matter with Spotty Crigg. About half-past eight he woke Tom, gave him some dinner, with a cold bottle to get him started again, and spun him a yarn about finding him drunk and robbed. The deal went through on schedule. At half-past nine Spotty drove up to the Sunderland house with the kid, rang the door-bell, and pushed Tom right into the hall, nursing a loud, talkative drunk. They say it put that function on the bum. I heard afterwards from Tom Letterblair that it was about the only time he ever really enjoyed himself at one of his sister's parties.

Nobody ever told the police or the papers. Every man jack in the deal was afraid to peach on the other, because he couldn't afford to tell on himself. All except the old lady and Tom, of course, and they were too tickled with the way things turned out to care about giving it away. Another funny thing: everybody quit a winner. You can see how Captain Wynch won. Tom paid Spotty Crigg a thousand for keeping him off the *Treasure Trove*, and I got fifty dollars for my job. And even the snob sisters won out. How? Well, sir, Tom Letterblair braced up from that time on. I suppose he took it that if he was far enough gone to the devil for his family to have to shanghai him, he must be a pretty bad egg. So he swore off, got on the water-waggon, and turned out pretty well, alongside of what they'd expected of him. His chorus-girl, Dotty, ran away with another man, and that helped him some, too.

Finally, Tom got a case on a swell New York heiress—a dizzy blonde, who was just simply It in the 400. He married her, to the high delight of Mr. and Mrs. J. Thrasher Sunderland.

And right there was where Tom had too much luck for any one man. I'll be darned if that girl's name wasn't Dotty, and she always believed Tom had it pricked on his arm just on her account! What d'you think of that?

But perhaps you're wondering how Maidslow got square. I'll tell you. He came to in the tug-office, where the crew had passed him a few swift kicks and left him. Pretty stupid and dopey yet, he crawled home to his own room, and slept some more of it off.

Then, when his head did finally clear out, he began to look himself over—to discover and explore, as you might say. When he looked in the glass, he must have nearly fell dead; his yellow moustache was gone. Then, he'd gone to sleep in old clothes, and he woke up in a swell, high-class rig, silk-lined, and without a spot, patch, or sign of wear. He had on silk gauze underwear, patent-leather shoes, diamonds in his shirt-front, cuff-links, and a pair of pretty hot socks. Feeling in his pockets, as a man will, he found a gold watch and chain, a gold cigarette-case, a corkscrew mounted in rubies, and $342 in bills and coin. Everyone in the deal had been too busy to touch him while he was drugged.

Long before he got his senses, his arm began to feel funny; so after he'd investigated the costume, he took off the Willy-boy coat and stripped up his shirt-sleeve. There was a tattoo mark, smarting like sin, with the name 'DOTTY' in beautiful capital letters!

Well, when he saw that, he went right up into the air. He was just like the old woman in the

nursery rhyme—'Lawk-a-massy on us! this is none of I!'

The tattoo mark was his only clue. I was the only one he knew in the business, so he came down to me, and wanted to know how and when and where and why and what the devil.

'Look here, my son,' says I, 'what are you kicking about, anyway? You go to sleep with eight dollars on your back and two bits in your jeans; you wake up with about a $750 rig on and a wad in your pocket more than you ever had in your life. The thing for you to do,' I says, 'is to lose yourself before you're called for, and to stay lost, good and hard. Next time you fade away on the water-front you may wake up in a jumper and overalls, shovelling garbage. You can't expect to draw a straight flush in diamonds every deal; next shuffle you may catch deuces. You take my advice, and drop a part of that roll of yours for a ticket in the "Owl" train to-night, before you're enchanted back again.'

'All right,' he says; 'I'll do it. But for God's sake tell me just one thing, and I'll ask no more questions. *Who in blazes is Dotty?*'

'Oh,' I says, 'she's the fairy godmother of your dream. She's changed into a seagull by this time!'

'Well,' concluded the rubber, 'he skipped, and

I have never seen him since from that day till to-night, when I found you scrapping with him; for this man is Harry Maidslow for sure. If you want to talk to him now, he'll probably be all right. He's had time to have a plunge, and you'll find him sleeping upstairs probably. I've got to go home, so good-bye. Come round again some time, and tell me about him.'

Admeh Drake, after a swim in the tank himself, passed through the main salon and upstairs, acting upon the hint of the dermograph artist. The place was fitted with cots, now filled with snoring occupants, and it was not until he had explored a second story that Admeh found him of the clay-yellow beard. He was alone in a secluded ward, sleeping peacefully. Admeh touched him, and Maidslow sat up suddenly, with a terrified stare.

'What d'you want? What d'you want of me?' he cried.

Admeh was astonished at his fright, but hastened to relieve the man's suspense.

'Oh, nothing bad, I hope. Is your name'—here he hesitated, and the man's face showed abject fear —'Maidslow?' And the mouth relaxed its tensity.

'Yes,' said the man. 'What d'you want?'

'I want to tell you that there's fifteen thousand dollars coming to you!' said Drake.

The man stared now in bewilderment.

'Ever know old Max Miller, Swiss bellringer?'

'A little,' said Maidslow. 'Why?'

'He's your rich uncle; he's left you his fortune. You caught him when you stole Maxie from him!'

'See here,' said Maidslow, 'what kind of a jolly are you giving me, anyway? I haven't seen Maxie —I suppose you mean my wife—for four years. If you know anything about her, tell me the whole thing, and tell it slow.'

For the second time that night Admeh Drake narrated his adventures, beginning at Coffee John's and ending with the news of Maxie and the legacy left to Harry Maidslow. But when he mentioned Colonel Knowlton's name as the trustee, Maidslow, who had listened so far in delight, gave an exclamation of despair.

'Oh God!' he cried, 'I can never get that money! Why couldn't it have been given in charge of someone else? Colonel Knowlton, of all men in the world!'

'Why can't you get it from him?' Drake asked.

'You listen to my story, and you'll know,' replied Maidslow.

CHAPTER XIII

THE STORY OF THE MESTIZA WOMAN

I DON'T exactly know why I married Maxie Morrow, except that I've always been a fool about women. The thing came so sudden, I just jumped and caught her on the fly. When she left me I went pretty much to the bad. Then Harry Maidslow disappeared on account of debts and one thing or another, and I turned up as Harry Roberts in St. Louis. That was just about when the Spanish War broke out. It was too good a chance to lose, and I decided to begin all over again. So I enlisted in the regulars, joining the 114th Infantry. I was hardly more than through the goose-step when we were sent to the Philippines.

I was no slouch nor shirk either, but I knew more about eating than anything else, and I naturally gravitated to the cook's tent, and put him on to a lot of things the boys liked. I got to be rather popular with the company in this way, and when

the commissary sergeant was appointed in Manila I managed to get the place, though I was only a rookie. Perhaps the captain's wife helped me out some. She, being an officer's lady, wasn't supposed to know I was on earth, but somehow she noticed me, and fixed it up easy.

Commissary work was a snap—little drill, no guard mount, leave of absence occasionally, and the run of the town in a little pony-cart. You see, each company had its quota of rations. We could draw them, or leave them and get credit. There was maple syrup and candy, canned fruit and chocolate, and all sorts of good stuff in the storehouse that we could get at wholesale rates. By cutting down on fresh meat and pinching on bacon, I managed the company's accounts so that we could have hot griddle cakes and maple syrup every day. That's the way I held my job.

Every morning I drove around Manila visiting the markets with a man to help me, exchanging sacks of flour for fresh baker's bread and cakes, getting chickens, and so on, besides making friends right and left. About two nights every week I was dancing or flirting with the half-breed women—Mestizas, they called them. That's how I got into trouble.

Her name was Señorita Maria del Pilar Assomp-

cion Aguilar, and nothing that ever I saw could touch her for looks. She was the kind of woman that makes you forget everything else that ever happened before. She and her brother owned about the whole of a province in the middle of the island of Luzon. When she came into the room it was all over with me. There was more of the Spanish than the Filipino in her, enough to give her the style and air of a lady, but she got her beauty from the tropics. Her hair was like one of those hot black nights they have down there, silky and soft, drifting around her face, but it was her eyes that made you lose sleep. They were blue-black, not melting, but wideawake and piercing. They were just a bit crossed, hardly a hair's-breadth out, but that little cast seemed to make her even prettier than if they were straight. A Kansas sergeant told me that the family was in from their country place, and that the Secret Service people were watching her. She and her brother were suspected of knowing a good deal about Aguinaldo's plans.

You remember that after the Battle of Manila the American troops lay in town for months, just drilling and waiting to see what the insurgents were going to do. There were all sorts of rumours afloat, and nobody knew which way the cat would jump. The Filipinos were camped in a semicircle outside

the city, and growing uglier every day. Our sentries were watching them close enough to see every nigger that stuck his finger to his nose at us.

I saw more and more of Maria, danced with her, or went to her house every night I could get off. It wasn't long before I saw that I had her going. Her brother looked as if he'd like to bolo me in the back, and never left us alone for a moment. I didn't care. I was too far gone myself to be afraid of him. I've seen one or two women in my time, but she could put it over them all.

Love goes pretty fast in hot countries. One night I happened to find her alone. Her brother was away on some Katipunan conspiracy business, most likely, or perhaps dodging our spies. She was dressed like a queen, all ready for me. I had no more than come in when she threw herself into my arms and lay there crying. I had gone too far, and I was in for it.

I let her stay there for a little while, kissing her, and trying to get her quiet, and then I looked away, and told her what I should have told her long before —that I had a wife and couldn't marry. She took it pretty hard at first.

After she had cried she laughed, and there was a load off my mind. I said to myself that women must be different down here, and thought I was

lucky to get out of it so easy. I thought perhaps she wasn't so badly hurt, after all. She said we'd forget it, and be friends just the same. I was a fool, and believed her. She asked me to come back to-morrow, and I said I would.

The next day I met Señor Aguilar, her brother, and he seemed to be as friendly as if we were bunkies. He insisted upon my having a drink with him. He seemed to be glad to know that Maria and I weren't so much lovers as he had thought. We sat most of the afternoon drinking cognac, and I got more and more pleased at having squared myself with them both. Then someone must have hit me over the head.

When I came to my head was bursting. My hands were bound, and I was covered with a sheet of canvas, being jolted in a little bobbing-cart. I yelled for help, and my only answer was the barrel of a Mauser rifle stuck in my face. Then I went off again into a stupor, and for the rest of that trip I only remember heat, thirst, hunger, stiff joints, and a murderous headache. The journey seemed to go on for years and years, but I didn't have energy enough even to wonder what had happened or where I was going.

Finally, I found myself stretched upon a cot in a white-walled room, looking through a great arched

window into a green *patio* waving with palms. Señor Aguilar was standing beside me smiling wickedly. Bromo-seltzer wouldn't have cleared my head the way the sight of him did.

'Señor Roberts,' he said, as soon as he saw that I was fully conscious, 'possibly you may have suspected that I have not always been charmed at the attentions you have paid Señorita Maria. However, you will be glad to learn that I have at last decided to accept you as my brother-in-law. I have given directions that the marriage ceremony shall take place to-morrow evening. I shall be honoured by the alliance, I am sure, for within a week you will be the only Americano alive on the island of Luzon. I have just come from a conference with General Aguinaldo, and the council of war has set upon February 4 as the date when we shall have the pleasure of capturing Manila and exterminating your army. You are at Carrino, a hundred miles from the city, helpless and unarmed. I think you will see the advisability of gracefully accepting the privilege of becoming a member of our distinguished family. It is barely possible,' he went on, 'that you may feel like declining to become the husband of Señorita Maria—Americanos are not renowned for their courtesy—so I give you a day to think it over. We Aguilars do not often force ourselves

upon strangers, but under the circumstances I consent to forget our family pride. You may give me your answer to-morrow.'

I knew what he meant. This was a sample of Spanish revenge with a Filipino barb to it. The only possible way out of it, although that seemed hopeless, was to escape, carry the news to General Otis, and save the army. It would mean a pardon, and maybe shoulder-straps for me.

Could I get away? That was the question. I had no time to lose. To travel a hundred miles through a foreign hostile country in a week without arms, food, or money was no child's play. But I watched my chance.

About sundown a Tagalo woman, homely as a hedge-fence, came in with my dinner. She hung round as though she were willing to talk, and I set to work to see how I could use her. I'd had some experience with women, and had found them mostly alike, black or white, and I used every trick I knew on her. Of all the cyclone love-making I ever did that got over the ground the quickest. I worked so hard I almost meant it, and she rose to the hook.

That night she got the guard off, filled him up with *bino*, and showed me the way out of the plantation through the banana grove. Outside she had a little scrub pony waiting. She pointed to it, and

gave me a general idea of the direction; then put her arms on my shoulders, and held up her great thick lips to be kissed. That was about the hardest work on the whole trip. Then I jumped into the saddle, and pelted down the road like Sheridan thirty miles away. I thought I was a hero all right, and I saw my picture in the papers with shoulder-straps, and the girls kissing me like Hobson. It was a grand-stand play to save the army. As near as I could calculate that was the night of January 31, and I had six days to get to Manila. It looked easy.

I travelled South all night long, and rode that pony almost to death. At daylight I hid and hobbled him, and crawled into the brush to sleep. When I woke up the nag was lying in a puddle of blood, hamstrung. That was the first blow.

There was not a soul in sight, but I imagined there was a bolo-man behind every tree. I listened, and every waving bush scared me worse. I was actually afraid of the light. If this was the beginning of the trip, what would the end be? But I had to go on and do my best.

I got under cover, and crawled like a snake till I came to a patch of banana-trees, where I stopped long enough to eat and fill my pockets. For two days I kept it up, making about thirty miles south, I suppose, dodging villages, skirting the roads, and

sleeping most of the daytime. It was hot and dusty ; food was scarce, and water scarcer.

So I fought my way through the tropical night, tortured by mosquitoes, insects, and ants. Luckily it was near the full of the moon, and I was able to drag myself along all night. The way gradually became more moist and swampy. I toiled through slippery mud, and had often to make detours to avoid sinking in great morasses. Then, just at dawn of the third morning, I came upon the banks of the Pasig. Now I had four days more in which to save the army, a quiet river to drift down at night, hiding by daylight. If I could only find something to float on !

Towards noon, as I lay in the bushes, I saw an empty boat bobbing down stream. I swam out to it, hauled it ashore, and hid it in the shrubbery. That night I began to paddle down the river, calling myself Lieutenant Roberts.

Twice before morning I thought I heard the sound of oars or paddles behind me, and got in shore to listen, but nothing appeared. At dawn I drew into the bank, hid the boat, and crawled to a safe place and slept like a horse. After I had foraged for bananas and got back to the river, the boat was gone ! I began to lose hope.

I was certain that I had tied the boat securely,

so I knew now that someone was on my trail. I had not only to make my way on foot through an unknown hostile country, but I was to be dogged at every step. What with the heat, starvation, and growing fear, I was pretty nearly out of my head; but the knowledge that upon me alone depended the safety of the army kept me on, straining every nerve. If it hadn't been for that I would have given it up right there.

After I had followed the bank of the river for some distance some logs came drifting down the current. I took the chances of being seen, and swam out and captured two of them. Tied together with long, tough creepers, they made a passable raft, and all that night I floated down stream, paddling as well as I could with my hands. I passed a lot of houses and villages on the banks, and knew that way that I was approaching the city. Sometimes I heard the sound of drums and bugles, for the insurgents were all over the country raising recruits. I must have been wandering in my mind by that time, for I wasn't a bit scared any more, only watching for wild bananas and bread-fruit, and wondering how long I'd last. I succeeded in killing some of the many tame ducks I saw, and ate them raw, not daring to build a fire.

Next night the river broadened out into a good-

sized lake ; by the look of it I took it to be Laguna de Bay, about twenty-five miles from Manila. I had only that night and the next day to reach our troops. If the first shot were fired before I got to the outposts, I might just as well drop into the Pasig and go to the bottom.

When the sun rose I slid into the water and struck out for the shore, intending to take my chances along the bank by daylight. This was the morning of February 4. Somehow, some way, I had to get through the circle of the Filipino lines drawn about the city. I hoped that I was too close to the town for them to dare to interfere with an American soldier in the daytime. So I climbed up a slippery bank and broke into the brush, about as tired and discouraged as a man could be, and still alive.

Then—all of a sudden—I was nailed from behind ! The game was up. Somebody gripped me by the throat. I was so weak there was no fight left in me. In half a minute I was bound by a dozen niggers, who came jumping out of the bushes, and fell on top of me from all sides at once. I didn't much care what they were going to do with me ; I had quit. Five days of fear and suspense and suffering had taken every bit of nerve out of me.

As soon as I was tied up they began to rush me along the road, kicking me up every time I faltered,

and jabbing me with bolos when I halted. I don't know why I didn't die right then. I don't know why my hair isn't white.

At last we came to a little Nipa hut guarded by Filipino soldiers in dirty white uniforms and bare feet. I was thrown inside, unbound, and given a gourd of rice. I ate it, hoping it was poisoned. From all I saw I was sure the tip about the outbreak was straight, for the place was bustling with soldiers coming and going, and I noticed they all had ammunition.

At about four o'clock I was bound again and gagged. I thought it was the end, sure, this time, and I was ready to die game. But it was only a new kind of torture. They prodded me with their bayonets, marching me to a place where I could look through the bushes right across a little river. There on the other side was one of our sentries pacing up and down, and way off I saw the Stars and Stripes floating in the sun. I could hear a band playing 'There'll be a hot time,' too. If I could have yelled across just once and given our boys warning, I wouldn't have minded anything they did to me. But I was gagged. I believe I cried.

Then they took me back to the hut, and night came on. Every minute that passed made the

torture worse and worse. I didn't care for myself any more; I was only thinking about the boys across the river, all unconscious of what was going to happen. I knew so well how careless they had got to be, and what fun they made of the idea that the niggers could possibly have the nerve to attack us. They would all be fooling around on the streets of Manila, probably half of them at the theatre or dancing in the cafés, leaving only the guard to take the first rush. It didn't seem possible that we could be saved. Our entrenchments would be carried at the first charge, I was sure. The Tagalos in town would rise, and it would mean a wholesale massacre.

Of course you know now all about the battle, for the night of February 4, 1899, is school-book history by this time. I doubt if there was any actual date set by Aguinaldo for rushing Manila, though he had considerable trouble keeping his cocky little niggers in order. If there was a time set, it wasn't that night, anyway. The Filipinos were getting more insulting every day, and I suppose it was only a question of a week or so at latest. But I didn't know it then. Everybody has heard by this time how the row opened with a Nebraska private shooting at four Tagalos who tried to pass blockhouse No. 6. But all I knew was what

Aguilar had told me, and from what I saw it looked nasty enough to be true. I could see that the niggers were prepared to go into action at a minute's notice.

So I watched and waited in the hut, dying by inches. I hoped I had been fooled, and feared that I wasn't. I imagined by what I had seen that I was at San Felipe, on the bank of the San Juan River, near where it joins the Pasig. If so, the Nebraska boys ought to be nearest me. My regiment was with Ovenshine, to the south of Manila, camped near Malate.

I felt about the way you feel when a tempest is coming up, and I was just waiting for the first clap of thunder. Along about half-past eight, I should say, I heard a single shot ring out, and right off, as if it had been a signal, the Mausers began to crack over by the river. The fire increased steadily till they were shooting all over to the north in the Tondo district. Company after company of Filipinos ran past the hut, the officers yelling like mad. Still there was nothing but Mausers going, popping like fire-crackers, and it seemed hours before their fire was returned. I was sure they had carried the town. At last I heard a volley of Springfields—I knew them by the heavy boom, and I knew then that the Nebraska boys had formed and had gone

into action. I had been with the regulars long enough to make fun of the volunteers, but when I heard that firing, I just stood up and yelled! It didn't die down, but kept up steadily, and I was sure the boys were holding the Filipinos back, when the Utah light artillery got into action. Then, just like a thunderstorm, the noise slowly swept round to the south, and the Springfields took up the chorus down through Anderson's Division—first the California boys and the Idahos of the First Brigade, till, about three in the morning, the regulars were engaged. Of course, I had to guess it out from what I knew of the way our troops were camped, but I imagined I could tell the minute my regiment began to fight. The Astor Mountain Battery and the 6th Artillery began to answer the Filipino Krupp guns, and then till daybreak the battle was going on all round the town.

I waited for the Springfield fire to weaken, dreading that we would be driven in, but when it kept up as if it never would stop I was sure that we had whipped them. The Filipinos began to retreat past the hut in disorder, the officers as badly scared as the privates. I was watching them, laughing, when four niggers broke into the hut, tied my arms, packed me on a mule, and rushed me off.

For four or five days I was carried back and forth

behind the Filipino army, dodging out of every skirmish, as the Americans pushed Aguinaldo back all along the circle. One night we spent in Mariquina, and left early in the morning, while white flags were flying to lure our troops into the town. Then we travelled south-west towards Pasai Paray. I wondered what they were keeping me for, and why they didn't either kill me or let me go. Then I remembered what I'd heard of Spanish prisons, and I stopped wondering and began to pray.

We ended finally in a church the insurgents were trying to hold while our boys were getting ready to charge. I was driven up into a bell-tower, half battered to pieces from our shells, and filled with smoke. A squad of natives was firing from the windows.

There in a corner was Señor Aguilar in the uniform of a Filipino Colonel, and I knew that my case was to be settled at last. He looked black. I didn't have long to wait this time. The niggers threw me down and put a Filipino uniform blouse on me, taking it from a dead soldier on the floor. I didn't try to resist—what was the use ?

Then Aguilar said to me, 'I hope you have enjoyed your journey, Señor Roberts. My men took good care to make it as interesting as possible. A man who has the courage to refuse the hand of an Aguilar

deserves distinguished treatment.' He got as far as that with his Spanish sarcasm, and then his native Filipino savagery got the better of him. 'You damned fool! did you think for a moment that I'd let an American hound like you marry my sister? Did you think I would let a man live who had played with her? No, by God! nor die either, except like a dog. I have let you live long enough to be hanged by your own countrymen. You're a deserter, and I've given some interesting information to your spies. And you'll be caught fighting in our ranks!' Then he drew his revolver and pointed to the dead Filipino on the floor. 'Take that gun and go to the window, and shoot down your brother dogs!' he cried.

I don't know why I didn't shoot him instead right there, but I had lost my nerve. I went to the window and fired at a bare space. And then, if you'll believe it, I saw my own regimental flag coming up with old Glory, as my own bunkies formed for the rush. It was Colonel Knowlton's command that was to take the church. I don't know what ever became of Aguilar, for I just stood up in the window and cheered as the boys came on. They charged with a yell that did my heart good to hear, for I lost myself and my danger watching the way they did the work.

But I remembered soon enough. The Filipino fire died away, and the insurgents scurried out of the building like rats. I was pulled back with them as they retreated, but as we crossed a dry creek-bed I stumbled and fell. Just then a detachment of my own company came up skirmishing, and saw me. I threw up my hands, and a corporal covered me. I knew him well; he used to drive in the little donkey-cart with me in Manila when I marketed.

He dropped his rifle and said: 'Good God! it's Roberts!'

I tried to explain how I'd been drugged and captured, but they wouldn't believe me. I had been posted for a deserter, and Aguilar had fixed me. All I could do was to ask them to shoot me right there, as if I had been killed in the battle. But they had cooled down some while I talked, and they couldn't do it in cold blood. Finally, the corporal said:

'See here, boys, I enlisted to fight, and not to be a hangman. Roberts has messed with me, and I can't do it. Perhaps what he says is true; I don't know. If you want to arrest him, go ahead. But I'll be darned if I want it told that the old 114th had to shoot a deserter. Come on, and let him take his chances!' He turned his back on me, and they

followed him. I ripped off my canvas coat, and ran down the creek and hid till night.

There wasn't a man on the whole island, nigger or white, who wasn't my enemy, and I didn't expect I'd ever escape. But there was a woman. She wasn't exactly the kind you'd ever suspect of having a heart, but she saved my life. She hid me in a shed outside of the town, and fed me and nursed me till I was able to get away on a blockade-runner and come to San Francisco. I owe that woman something, and if I'm ever flush again she'll get it back.

So it was a woman who sent me to the Philippines, it was a woman who got my promotion, a woman who tortured me like a fiend, and a woman who saved me. And the queer part of it is that the last one was what most people would call the worst of the lot!

Admeh Drake was seeing his own phantoms of the Philippines on his cot. The man with the yellow beard—Maidslow, *alias* Roberts—was looking with eyes that saw beyond the walls of the Hammam Baths, when the hero of Pago Bridge brought himself back with a jerk.

'You've told me all except how you got here,' he said.

'Plain drunk,' said Maidslow; 'the first I dared

get after I left the islands. But it isn't safe for me to stay in San Francisco now Colonel Knowlton is back here. If Maxie saw through the beard he will, and the place is full of Secret Service men.'

Admeh Drake suddenly jumped from the couch.

'What will you give me if I get that legacy for you?'

'A thousand dollars.'

'Done!' cried the Hero. 'See here, it's too easy! Colonel Knowlton don't know your real name's Maidslow, does he?'

'No, I enlisted as Roberts.'

'Dead to rights. He'll take Maxie's word when she identifies her husband to him. All right again. Well, let me play Harry Maidslow, and go with Maxie to the Colonel. I take my thousand, and you take the rest, and Maxie. How's that?'

'If Maxie will stand for it, I'm ready,' said the deserter.

During the rest of the night the man who went for a soldier and wished he hadn't, and the man who didn't go and wished that he had, lay in an upper corridor of the Hammam Baths discussing the details of their conspiracy.

CHAPTER XIV

'QUOD ERAT DEMONSTRANDUM'

SOOTHED by the drone of the retired car-conductor's narrative, and wearied out with the continuous performance of the night's adventures, the Harvard Freshman fell asleep on the wooden bench in his cell at the Tanks, and it was not until a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder that he awoke. A bluff policeman was standing over him.

'Your order for release has come, and you can go now. You and your pardner was asleep, and I clean forgot you.'

The officer had a similar word with the conductor, and led the two prisoners out into the corridor. While they were waiting for their property to be taken from the boxes in which it had been stored, Eli Cook felt idly in his pocket, and drew out a torn scrap of red paper marked with Chinese writings.

'That's all they left on me when I was searched,' he said, with a feeble grin; 'want it for a souvenir

of a happy evenin'? It dropped out of a China-man's pocket yesterday up to Dupont Street, and I picked it up.'

The Freshman took it in the same spirit of mockery and stuffed it into his own pocket, to keep company with several pawn-tickets. As they went together into the street, the city bells were striking two o'clock.

'Gosh!' Coffin cried with a burst of his old fervour, 'I feel like the chairman of a women's club after an annual election! Where you going to feed your visage, old man?' he added tentatively. He was out of funds, hungry and weary. The hundred dollars won from the Klondyker in the smoking wager, deposited for bail, had, in fact, completely exhausted his resources. The conductor, however, refused to take the hint, and manifested a desire to get away.

'Oh, I got to snoop back to the Beach,' he said. 'This has been a hard day for me, and I dunno how I'm a-goin' to get even on my hundred if I have to stand trial. I ain't exactly hungry, anyway, but perhaps I'll stew up some canned stuff out to the cars. Want to come along? You'll have to walk, though, and it's full seven miles through the Park.'

'No, thanks,' said Coffin dryly. 'I've got a poke-out coming to me at nine, and I guess I can wait. I'll

walk up and down and let the girls admire me for a season.'

'Well, good-bye, then,' said Eli Cook, of Carville-by-the-Sea; and he hurriedly made off down Kearney Street.

The youngster mused. 'I shall now endeavour to give the correct imitation of a thousand-dollar sport in the act of starving to death. I am wondering, in my simple Japanese way, whether that gentle Klondyker, with my prize-money in tow, will ever swim into my ken again. It's a good deal like trying to find a pet oyster in a mud flat, but I'll do my best. Angels, they say, can do no more. Selah!'

With that he walked up to Gunschke's cigar-store, and found the young man who had assisted at the smoking orgy of the night before. The clerk, however, knew nothing of the Klondyker's where-abouts, having never seen the Father of the Kata-koolanat previous to the debauch. The Freshman was in a quandary.

'Say, has your luck changed yet?' the salesman asked. 'Last thing I heard the curve was still rising.'

'By Jove! I had forgotten all about that,' cried Coffin. 'Let's see, I won my hundred at the wager, then I won my thousand, more or less, in the Chinese lottery; but then I was pulled, and dropped the

hundred at the Tanks. The grand psychological query is, Do I get that thou'? If I had a nickel to my name, I'd put the delicate question to the oracle of the slot, and find out how I stand on Fortune's golden rolls.'

'Oh, I'll stake you. Here you are,' the salesman answered, tossing out a nickel; 'I'd like to know myself. If you're still winning, I'll take you out to the race-track and let you do my betting.'

The Freshman pushed the coin down the slot of the poker-machine and jerked the handle. Three treys appeared behind the wire.

'Bully!' cried the salesman. 'Here, you draw four cigars!'

'Nay, nay, Pauline!' Coffin exclaimed in disgust; 'I wouldn't eat another cigar to be crowned King of the Barbary Coast! I can never endure the smell of tobacco again without being as sea-sick as a cat in a swing. Much obliged for your charity, but I'll call it square for the good omen.'

Irrationally cheered by the portent, James Wiswell Coffin, third, wandered out aimlessly, and floated with the throng down towards the cheaper end of Kearney Street. The cool, green, grassy square at the Old Plaza attracted him, and he entered the little park.

* * * * *

Meanwhile, the plot hatched by the Hero of Pago Bridge and the deserter of the Philippines had gone forward without a hitch. Drake and Maidslow had met Maxie at the Biograph Theatre, and she had consented to visit Colonel Knowlton and represent Drake as her missing husband, that Maidslow might be safe from being recognised and apprehended by the Secret Service men as a deserter. Both husband and wife were affected at this meeting after so many years, and it was evident to the Hero that a reconciliation would be easily arranged. Both were lonely. Maxie had worked so hard, and Maidslow had lived so adventurously, that the prospect of settling down to a peaceful married life attracted them equally. This was now possible if the legacy of old Max could be collected safely from the Colonel. Their scheme was nothing less than conspiracy, but after all Maidslow, her real husband, would be the one profited, for he would receive the money. Maxie's conscience was assuaged by this consideration.

At 10.30 that morning Maxie and Drake called upon the Colonel at the Army Headquarters, and passed the ordeal successfully. The transport officer was too busy to spend much time in investigation, and, knowing Maxie as well as he did, it did not occur to him to suspect fraud. At any rate, the cheque

for $15,000 which he passed over to Admeh (made payable to Harry Maidslow) would not be cashed without proper identification, and the bank would relieve the Colonel of this necessity. He congratulated them on their reunion, and dismissed them in relief that the responsibility of his trust was over.

How Maidslow was to cash the cheque was now the question. It was easily solved at a meeting of the three principals in the plot by the decision that old Dietrich, the proprietor of the Biograph Theatre, could identify the payee. He would undoubtedly believe Maxie's introduction of Maidslow as her husband, as this time, at least, she would be speaking the truth. They left Admeh Drake on the sidewalk while they proceeded to this next step.

The old Dutchman was canny, however.

'How do I know dat dis man is your huspant?' he said. 'You say so, Maxie, put I neffer seen him pefore. See here, didn't you say Harry Maidslow hat a tattoo mark on his arm alretty? He hat a girl's name 'Dotty,' you tole me once. Lemme see dat mark, and I vill itentify him, sure! Den I know it's all right.'

This was easily proven. Maidslow stripped up his sleeve and exhibited the tattoo mark, and old Dietrich was convinced. He put on his hat to accompany them to the bank. Excusing himself for

a moment, Maidslow slipped out and spoke to Admeh Drake :

' It's all right, Drake ; we're going right down to cash the cheque. You get away before Dietrich sees you and gets suspicious, and I'll meet you with the thousand dollars at Lotta's Fountain in half an hour.'

Drake walked down Market Street. In a few minutes he saw Maxie, Maidslow, and the old Dutchman approaching. He kept out of sight while they passed him on their way to Montgomery Street, where the bank was located. Then he commenced his vigil at Lotta's Fountain.

This is the very hub and centre of San Francisco, in the heart of the shopping district, and the strategic point for confidence men, tourists, loiterers, and sports. The three great newspaper buildings form here a towering group against the sky, and the Palace Hotel, a massive block honeycombed with windows, is within a stone's-throw. About him eddied the principal currents of the town, carrying their heterogeneous collection of humanity. The fountain is an island in the triangular opening formed by the union of Geary, Kearney, and Market Streets, and each of these important thoroughfares contributed to the liveliness of the place. Groups of brightly-gowned women were awaiting the cable cars to take them to

the Oakland Ferry; cheap actors promenaded up the Rialto of Market Street; the Geary Street cars swung on the turn-table, impeding the traffic, and along the sidewalk on Kearney Street the flower-vendors made a vivid splotch of colour. The whole place was alive and bustling, and time went fast with the watcher at the gilded fountain where no one drank.

When Admeh Drake looked up to the clock-tower above his head, he was surprised to see that it was already a quarter to twelve. He had waited nearly an hour. He began to be impatient, nervous, suspicious. Maidslow should have returned with Maxie long before this. Something must have happened, or else—he grew frightened at the thought—they had given him the slip, and would avoid paying him the thousand dollars as his share of the plot! He waited now with less hope. Surely, if they were coming at all, they would have returned before this. He lost interest in the passers-by, and watched only for the two who were to bring him his reward.

The clocks struck noon, and the throng was swelled by clerks and business men released for their lunch hour. One o'clock, and the tide poured back again. Two, and he grew weary with standing, and sat upon the pedestal of the fountain. Three, and he gave up all hope. The excitement which had kept him up

all night relaxed; he was faint and limp from lack of food and sleep.

So he, too, joined the human current, and drifted along Kearney Street with no set plan of action, his only idea being to kill time. There were enough others to keep him company.

He turned into the Old Plaza at Portsmouth Square, his eyes caught by a sparkle of light from the gilded sails of the little bronze ship on the Stevenson Memorial. He walked nearer to see what it was, and as he approached he perceived a young man in a red sweater reading the inscription on the marble shaft. It was the Harvard Freshman.

'"To be honest, to be kind," ' Coffin was reading, '"to earn a little and to spend a little less, to make upon the whole a family happier for his presence." And then he turned away with a bitter protest in his throat, to see the Hero of Pago Bridge looking over his shoulder.

'Pretty, ain't it?' said Admeh Drake; and he, too, looked at the immortal quotation from the 'Christmas Sermon.' Had it been written for him alone, it could not have stung him more fiercely.

'"... To renounce, when that shall be necessary, and not be embittered; to keep a few friends, but these without capitulation—above all, on the same grim condition, to keep friends with himself—here is

a task for all that a man has of fortitude and delicacy."'

He turned to Coffin, with despair in his eye, all that was best in him writhing at these graven words.

'Say, what the hell did they stick that up there for, right where every man that has failed can read it and eat out his heart?'

Coffin slapped him on the back in sympathy, for even the irrepressible Freshman seemed for a moment to be touched by the admonitory legend. But he was not one to be serious for long, and after that one swift glance into his soul, his customary spirit asserted itself.

'See here,' he said, 'this is the way I look at it: you can't have good luck with your conscience all the time, any more'n you can with your purse. Moral—cultivate your forgettery. We meet under the shadow of the good ship *Bonaventure*, aforesaid ship being full of buccaneers and sailing over a Sublime Moral Precept, by R. L. S. I doubt if he would say he was always such a damned angel himself if anybody should drive up in a chariot and ask him. Lastly, my brethren, why be phazed at a dozen lines of type? Discard your doubts, and draw to the glorious flush of hope. Amen. Let's have a drink.'

They pledged each other somewhat forlornly in Spring Valley water, and then Coffin remarked :

'By the way, what did you do with the dime Coffee John gave you ? Made a fortune yet ?'

'I made a thousand dollars, but I've got it to get. I've roped her, but I can't throw her yet.'

'A thou'!' Coffin exclaimed ; 'the devil you have ! Jupiter ! but that's queer. Why, that's my fix precisely. I got it on the hook all right, but I couldn't haul it into the boat.'

Exchanging confidences over the night's adventures, the two wandered up to the top of the sloping Plaza, where the back of the Woey Sen Low restaurant arose, three stories high, an iron balcony projecting from each tier of windows.

'Let's come up to the Chink's Delmonico's,' suggested the Freshman. 'You can get a great view of the city from up there, and you don't have to spend money if you don't want to.'

They went round to the front entrance, ascended the stairs, and filed past empty tables, gaining the balcony. As they stood gazing over San Francisco, they heard steps approaching from behind, and two persons came into the nearest room. Coffin, who was standing with Drake out of sight of the new arrivals, peeped round the corner of a porcelain lantern.

'It's a woman,' he whispered, 'and a peacher-looloo of the first degree, too, by Jove! Nigger or Kanacker blood, though. Let's go through and have a look at her.'

Drake assented. They entered the open doorway, and passed carelessly through the room. A man at the table looked up and nodded.

'Whittaker!' said the Freshman, when they were out of sight, 'the medium, as I exist! I wonder how he ever got into a friendly mix-up with that chocolate-coloured fairy. There was no heroine with raven locks in mine.'

At this moment Vango appeared, and stuck a dirty finger in Coffin's buttonhole. The medium's hair was matty and stringy, his clothes wrinkled and spotted in a shocking disorder.

'Come in here,' he said; 'I want to make you acquainted with a lady friend.' And he escorted the adventurers to a table where the quadroon sat, already clad in widow's weeds.

'Mrs. Moy Kip, let me introduce Mr.'—here he hesitated, and was prompted—'Mr. Coffin and Mr. Drake. Set down, gents. This here lady has suffered recent a sad and tragical bereavement. I was just about to console her when you passed by, and I hoped you might help distrack her mind from gloomious thoughts and reflections. The party

what has just passed out, you understand, was a Chinee, but he is now on the happy side of Jordan, in the spirit sphere, and we are some in hopes of having the pleasure of his society to-night in astral form, if the conditions is favourable.'

Here he nudged the Freshman under the table, and Coffin passed the hint to Drake, neither of them knowing exactly what was expected of them.

'Do you speak Chinese, madam?' inquired the Freshman, at a loss how to begin the conversation. 'I've often wondered about these signs in here. I suppose they're mottoes from Confucius. Perhaps you wouldn't mind translating some.'

He pointed to several long, narrow strips of coloured paper which hung from the walls.

'Oh, I only know a little Chinese, just about enough to read a common business letter in the Cantonese dialect,' said the quadroon.

Coffin recalled the scrap of paper given him by the retired conductor in the Tanks, and he drew it from his pocket to show to her. The sharp black eyes of the ex-medium, sharpened by long practice, fastened upon it, and he darted a skinny hand.

'Here you are!' he cried excitedly to the quadroon. 'I told you I'd find it, and I done it. Look at that, Mrs. Moy Kip, and see if it ain't the very same identical piece of paper you was a-searchin'

for. Oh, I felt it a-comin' just now, when this gentleman entered into the room. I felt a wave of self-independent spirit message, and I seen a red aura round his head, thereby denoting he was a Psychie.' Exultant as he was, however, he looked over his shoulder fearfully, as if he dreaded interruption.

The quadroon had taken another scrap of red paper from her bosom, and tremblingly placed the torn edges of the two together. They fitted exactly. She suddenly rose, with set eyes and mouth, and ran toward the stairs without a word.

Vango followed her, leaving Drake and Coffin to wonder at the cause of the excitement. After a few moments the Professor returned trembling, pale, and crestfallen. He sank into a seat, and covered his face with his hands.

'Mrs. Higgins! Mrs. Higgins!' he moaned. 'I just see her out by the stairs; she wouldn't let me by. Oh, God, she's after me again! And that nigger woman's gone, and I've lost her! Think of it, after all I've went through, to lose her just as I was winnin'!'

He looked up haggardly, and pounded his fist on the table. 'By Jimminy Christmas! that there piece of paper was worth a thousand dollars to me, gents, and I've lost it!'

Drake and Coffin exchanged glances of amused surprise, and Vango added weakly, looking at the Freshman: 'Much obliged, I'm sure, Mr. Coffin.' He was wondering if he would be asked to divide the prize in case he got it.

'Oh, don't mention it, old chap,' Coffin answered; 'you're welcome to all you can make out of that paper with your flim-flam. That sort of humbuggery isn't exactly in my line. But suppose you put us wise as to the facts in the case.'

The ex-medium, still trembling with the memory of his supernatural fears and discomfited by the escape of the woman, pulled himself together, and told of the remarkable series of events which had brought him that morning to Hunter's Point in a launch containing a quadroon woman, a dead Chinaman, a scrap of paper, and two thousand dollars' worth of smuggled opium.

'I've been working the widow soft and easy ever since,' he said. 'Gettin' that first piece of paper was what I incline to denominate a masterpiece, but this findin' of the missin' half right in your pocket is nothin' less than inspirational second-sight. She ought to think herself lucky to have fell in with me at no cost to herself for a sittin' whatever. But will she pay up? That's the question. Niggers is credible, but they is also tricky. But,

anyways, I bet them two Chinee highbinders is apt to meet Moy Kip on the opposite shore to-night.'

It grew dark as they sat there, and when they had finished their stories they went out upon the balcony again. The light on the Ferry tower burned like a star against the waters of the Bay. The street-lamps followed suit, and the night closed in. The three Picaroons were in the first quiet exhilaration that follows hunger and fatigue. Except for the Freshman's broken rest at the Tanks, not one of them had slept since their meeting the previous evening; not one of them had eaten. Their eyes were glassy, but not yet sleepy; they were like dead men who could still walk and speak. A dull fever burned in their veins. Talk then grew faint, and even thought flickered but dimly. There was nothing positive to look forward to but Coffee John's invitation to supper at nine o'clock; so they waited listlessly for the hour. Finally, a proposal from the indefatigable Coffin to wander through the Chinese quarter lured them out.

They turned into Ross Alley. This narrow lane of shops and gambling-houses was swarming with passers-by. As the three men entered the passage, the sound of banging doors preceded them; the outer guards of the fan-tan resorts, catching sight

of white faces and fearing detectives, were slamming and bolting the entrances.

Before they had gone half the length of the alley, Coffin noticed a Chinaman in felt hat and blue blouse standing idly by a lamp-post, and behind him a second man leaning against a brick wall. The Freshman's tired eye awoke and took the two in at a glance, for he noted something vaguely furtive in their apparently careless attitudes.

Now another Chinese approached the two figures at a rapid pace, holding one hand hidden in his blouse. A few feet behind him a coolie followed, looking sharply to the right and left. Coffin was just about to call Drake's attention to them, when, without warning, the man by the lamp whipped out a revolver, and fired point-blank at the one approaching. The pistol barked three times in rapid succession, then the weapon was swiftly handed to the loafer by the wall. It was like the passing of the ball to the quarter-back in a football game, for, on the instant, these two and another broke through the crowd, and ran in different directions. As they started, the bodyguard of the wounded man drew his own pistol, and sent a stream of bullets after the fugitives.

The fusillade scattered the crowd in the alley. The Chinese dodged this way and that, escaping into

doors and down cross lanes, to avoid the officers who would soon appear to question them. The Freshman pulled his companions hurriedly into a little shop, and, whirling them back to the door, drew their surprised attention to a case of jade ornaments.

'Lay low!' he exclaimed; 'the police will be here in a moment, and we don't want to be run in and held for witnesses. We couldn't identify the Chink, anyway. I say let 'em have it out their own way.'

He looked out, and saw a plain-clothes detective running down the alley to where the dead man lay. From the other end of the passage two officers in uniform came up, sweeping a dozen Chinese in front of them. One policeman lined the fugitives in front of him, while the other examined them for weapons. As none were found, the crowd was rapidly dispersed. The detective looked in at the shop-door.

'Did you see the shooting?' he asked.

'We got to the door here just in time to see three men running, but I didn't catch their faces,' said Coffin coolly. 'What's the row?'

'Oh, another Tong war,' said the detective. 'Moy Kip was shot last night, and this one is the first one to pay up the score. Of course, we can't do nothing

without no witnesses, except this monkey.' And he went about his business.

'Well,' said Professor Vango, as they passed from the scene, 'that's the finishin' conclusion to my picnic. I hope your'n won't end so tragic.'

'I don't know,' the Freshman replied; 'you may find your dusky beauty yet. Then Drake has to catch his soubrette, and I would fain discover the gentle Klondyker. I consider it about horse and horse. Funny! Here each of us has made a thousand dollars, and not one is any better off than he was last night, plum broke! That's what we used to call a paradox at Harvard, in "English 13." And I'm carnivorously hungry to boot. I haven't bitten anything except a cigar since the feed last night.'

'Nor me, neither,' asserted the Professor.

'Here, too,' said Admeh Drake.

'Then it would seem to be up to Coffee John again; he seems to be the god in this machine. Come on, and we'll give an imitation of a thirty-stamp mill crushing ore!'

So saying, still jubilant, still heartening them with frivolous prattle, the Harvard Freshman piloted his comrades down Clay Street.

As they passed the Old Plaza, Drake looked over his shoulder once or twice, and said: 'I reckon we re

being followed, pardners. There's a Chink been on our trail ever since we turned out of the lane up yonder. I hope they ain't got it in for us because we saw the scrap.'

The soft-footed coolie was half a block behind them when, without a word of explanation, Coffin suddenly bolted and ran up Kearney Street. Vango gave a gasp, and clutched the cowboy's arm.

'What's the matter?' he whimpered. 'Where's Coffin went? Is he scared?'

'You can search me!' Drake said philosophically. 'I give it up, unless he's running to get an appetite for dinner. Don't you fret; I'll stand by you if there's any trouble.'

Taking the medium's arm, he walked him down Clay Street until they came to Coffee John's window. Then, looking round, they saw the Chinaman coming up to them boldly, with a grin on his face.

'You name Vango?' the coolie said.

'That's right; what d'you want with him?' the cowboy replied; for the Professor was too frightened to answer.

The Chinaman felt inside his blouse, while Drake watched for the first sight of a weapon. Nothing more formidable was brought forth,

however, than a smallish, paper-wrapped parcel. Vango took it cautiously; it was suspiciously heavy.

'Moy Kip wife send,' explained the Chinaman, and retreated up the street.

The medium, in an agony of excitement, opened the parcel by the light of the window. It contained fifty golden double-eagles. His little beady black eyes sparkling, he jubilantly entered the restaurant with Drake.

Close on their heels came James Wiswell Coffin, third, waving a bunch of greenbacks above his head.

'I got him! Oh, I got the green-eyed Klondyker all right!' he cried. 'He has cashed my lottery ticket, and he handed me over eleven hundred pea-green dollars. Oh, frabjous day, we dine, we dine to-night!'

Coffee John, who had been conversing with some unseen patron in a tiny, curtained-off room in the rear of the shop, now came forward and greeted the Picaroons.

'My word!' he remarked, 'yer *do* look bloomin' 'appy, reglar grinnin' like a Chinee at a Mission Sabbath-school! All but Dryke,' he added, noticing his favourite's gloomy looks, in sharp contrast to the

delight of the others. 'Wot's wrong? Ain't your aig 'atched, too? Well, p'raps it will yet. They's a lydy a-wytin' darn in thet thyre room for you. Been thyre a 'arf-hour, an' is nar nacherly a bit impytient. Looks like a narce gal, too, if she didn't put so much flar on her fyce. She may 'ave good news for yer.'

Drake had started before Coffee John finished, and, entering the little compartment, found Maxie Morrow awaiting him. He held out his hand in pleased surprise. She offered him a thick envelope in return.

'Oh, I'm in an awful hurry,' she began, 'and I haven't a minute to spare. I'm afraid you thought we weren't going to keep our word, but really, Mr. Drake, we couldn't help it. I was so sorry to keep you waiting so long, but just as we left the bank I saw Colonel Knowlton come in. I was so afraid he'd suspect something, seeing me there with Harry instead of with you, and Harry was so afraid the Colonel would put the Secret Service men on his track, that we jumped on a car, and went right to my house on Bush Street, and Harry has been afraid to show himself outdoors since. We're going to try to get away to-morrow to Southern California, but I was just bound that you should have your thousand

dollars, so I brought it down here. Lucky you told Harry you were coming, wasn't it ? Now good-bye, and good luck to you !'

With that she rustled out of the restaurant, and Drake joined the group at the counter.

'Nort by no means !' Coffee John was saying. 'Tortoni's be blowed ! If Coffee John's peach-pie an' snykes ain't good enough for yer to-night, yer can go and eat withart me. Fust thing, I want to hear the tyles told. Afore I begin to 'elp yer eat yer money, I want to know 'ow it's come by. After thet, I don't sye as I won't accep' a invitytion to dine proper.'

The proprietor was insistent, and though a thousand dollars burned in each pocket, the Picaroons, so gloriously come into port, sat down to a more modest repast than had been set in that room the night before. Between mouthfuls, one after the other told to his benefactor the story of his lucky dime—the Freshman with a tropic wealth of flowery trope and imagery ; the ex-medium with unction and self-satisfied gladness ; the Hero of Pago Bridge with his customary simplicity. Not one of them expected the flagon of morality that was to be broached by their host, forbye.

For as the tales developed, Coffee John's face grew set in sterner disapproval. Coffin's story

moulded disdain upon the cockney's lip; the recital of Professor Vango altered this expression to scorn; but at the confession of Admeh Drake's the proprietor's face froze in absolute contempt, and he arose in a towering wrath.

'See 'ere, gents,' he began, folding his red bare arms—'though w'y I should call yer thet, w'ich yer by no means ain't, I don't know—nar I see wot good it is to plyce a mistaken charity in kindness. I've went and chucked awye me thirty cents on yer, blow me if I ain't! I said yer was 'ard cyses, an' yer *be* 'ard cyses, an' so yer'll nacherly continue till yer all bloomin' well jugged for it. You, Coffin,' he pointed with severity, ''ave conspired against the laws of this 'ere Styte, w'ich forbids a gyme o' charnce, besides 'avin' patronized a Chinee lottery, w'ich the same is also illegal. You, Vango, 'ave comparnded a felony by bein' a receiver o' merchandise subjick to dooty in Federal customs. And you, Dryke, who bite me blue if I didn't 'ave a soft spot in me 'art for yer, 'ave mucked abart an' obtayned money under false pretences, an' 'arbored an' abetted a deserter from the harmy o' your country; for if you believe that there cock-an'-a-bull story, I don't!' He raised his arms threateningly, like an outraged Jove. 'Git art from under me roof, all o' yer! Yer no better than convicks in the Penn!'

The three Picaroons passed through the door, and faded into the darkness. The cockney watched them separate, and then, re-entering his shop, turned out the lamp and locked the door.

'I feed no more bums,' said Coffee John.

THE END

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